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"YOU ARE WELCOME INDEED TO DREADMERE ABBEY, LYNNETTE," SAID LADY BOURDILLON, WARMLY.

POOR LITTLE LINNET.

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CHAPTER I.

It was half-past four o'clock on a warm September afternoon, and the chief arrival platform of the great Paddington Terminus was all movement, din, and confusion.

A hot and mighty engine was hissing in wrathful fashion, having come to a standstill at last; and was now belching forth clouds of soft, blue steam into the vast and wonderful network of the station roof.

Cab-wheels went rattling over the stones with a more than deafening noise; passengers were flying precipitately to and fro in quest of luggage that could not be found; with guard and porters seeming well-nigh frantic too, between the prayers and imprecations of the miscellaneous throng by which they were surrounded and attacked so impatiently upon that baggage-strewn platform from end to end.

It was the arrival of the express from the South-west of England which was causing all the bustle and din.

In the midst of the *mêlée*, with all the luggage, goods and chattels, that she possessed in the world gathered in a heap close to her side, and there watched with much serious anxiety, dressed dowdily in country-made looking mourning garments, all dusty and creased by third-class travelling, stood, patiently waiting and staring wistfully around her, a slender maiden, barely twenty years old, with a small pale dark face, and large brown eyes shadowed now with thought and perplexity.

She looked, indeed, very young and lonely, standing there in the eager, bustling crowd all by herself, with apparently neither friend nor companion near her; and in truth she was feeling as she looked just then—very lonely and very friendless.

Linnet was her name—Linnet Lethbridge; and that September afternoon saw her a human atom in the great busy world of London for the first time in all her experience of life.

She had been travelling without rest or break from an early hour in the morning, and had yet to travel even further.

Her destination—which she hoped vaguely to reach some time that evening—was situated in the county of Suffolk; but, she being totally ignorant, after arriving in London, both as to where she should go or what she should do for the best, it had been promised Linnet that someone should meet her at the Paddington terminus, and thence accompany her safely on to Dreadmere Abbey, whither indeed she was really journeying on that golden September day—to Dreadmere Abbey, which in the future, the unknown future ahead of her, was to be her home.

"Pray, pardon me—you must be Miss Lethbridge, I fancy?"

She turned quickly, looking up with relief and gladness into the man's face. For it was a man who had addressed her—a rather tall, fair-haired, and handsome man—and she found that he was close to her side.

His voice had been raised considerably, for the din and hubbub around them everywhere were deafening still.

"Yes," said Linnet gratefully, and as clearly and distinctly as she could. "I am Miss Lethbridge. And I do trust that you are here to meet me?"

There must have been a pitiful, pleading, almost confiding sort of note in the tones of the

girl, for the young man smiled as though amused at them rather, and nodded his fair curly head reassuringly—a head which Linnet felt was very far above the crown of her modest little black hat.

"Will you follow me?" said the stranger kindly, then.

Linnet said "Yes" with alacrity, and her friend in need beckoned to a porter forthwith—one happily within hail and at the moment disengaged—who at once took in charge her small collection of luggage, preceding the stranger and herself to the four-wheeled cab that was waiting in readiness for them on the stones beyond the platform.

Quickly and deftly were the trunks hoisted to the cab-roof, and as quickly and deftly did Linnet feel herself being assisted into the interior of the mouldy-smelling vehicle.

"And so this is a London cab!" thought she, rather ruefully. "I hope my boxes are safe up there, and will not break through overhead!"

Then the porter received his fee, and the cabman whipped up his poor lean jaded beast, and in the next instant Linnet and her unknown companion were jogging off and out of the station—out into the ceaseless hum and motion of the busy, crowded streets, where the walls and roofs of the grimy houses were flecked by the waning September sunshine, which somehow, thought country-bred Linnet, seemed sadly removed from its rightful element in that moiling, toiling London world!

"Talking now will be rather difficult work," observed the stranger presently, as they jogged and rattled along the Edgware-road, together with a dense line of other conveyances; and as he spoke he turned his deep blue eyes, with a laughter-light in their depths, straight on to her little brown face—"it will make one's throat too dry and sore. Had we not better wait until we gain a quieter part of the town?"

"Much better, I should say," Linnet agreed, with a little smile. "Though of course you know better than I."

"I expect you are feeling very tired?" said the young man all the same.

"Tired!" echoed she. "Oh, indeed I am! Have we very much farther to travel?"

"Some little distance yet," responded her companion gravely. "I am sorry, Miss Lethbridge, for your sake."

Linnet sighed.

"And where are we going now—in this cab?" said she.

"To the station at Liverpool-street, and into the very heart of this great city," he explained, as distinctly as the jolting and jarring of the wretched cab would allow. "And then, you know, we start afresh straight for Agglestone, where we shall find the carriage from the Abbey waiting to take us home—really home at last, Miss Lethbridge," he said pleasantly. "Our journey by rail on the Great Eastern will not be more than a couple of hours—scarcely that, if we catch the right train."

"That is something to be thankful for," said Linnet simply.

And then she fell to wondering whether he could be the Earl—Derrick Bourdillon? And if not the Earl himself—who?

As yet she did not know his name; and, womanlike, was very curious to discover it. She resolved to find out then and there.

"You know my name," she said timidly. "May I know yours? I suppose, however, you are the Countess's son—Lord Bourdillon?"

He stared at her in silence, and for a few seconds looked puzzled.

The pleasant light faded out of his kindly blue eyes; they became gravely sorrowful, darkly troubled.

"No, Miss Lethbridge," he answered slowly, "I am not Derrick Bourdillon. I am Gordon Noble. If you really did not know that—then I ought to have told you before."

"How should I have known it, Mr. Noble?" said Linnet, with a wondering look. "Certainly the Countess promised me faithfully that *someone* should meet me on my arrival in London, but she gave me no name of any kind in her letter."

"That is strange," he observed thoughtfully—"but I am inclined to believe now that she forgot to do so. Because on the very day it was settled that you should come to the Abbey, she—the Countess—expressed a wish that I should be the person to meet you in town. So here you see me."

So far Linnet was satisfied, and wished to be quiet again.

She leaned well back in the corner of the rumbling cab, and gazed absently out of the window at the other cabs and drays which now and then overtook their own vehicle with a rush in the crowded thoroughfares; and once more Linnet fell to wondering and dreaming.

Gordon Noble it seemed was his name—but who was he; what was he?

Strange, indeed, as he said, that the Countess herself had, in her last letter, mentioned nothing whatever about him!

Was he then a great friend of the Countess's, or a friend of Derrick Bourdillon's?—perhaps the friend of both, or possibly the real friend of neither?

Surely, thought Linnet, this Gordon Noble had never met her on behalf of the Countess, in his capacity of steward, agent, or anything hireling of that denomination?

Oh, no, she decided—assuredly not.

His every word, his whole bearing, bespoke the born gentleman too well. His dress and demeanour altogether had in them that indefinable something which told simply yet unmistakaby enough of refinement and gentle life.

Seated by-and-by in another railway-carriage, but now in a roomy first-class compartment, with her new acquaintance sitting directly opposite to her, Linnet had then an excellent opportunity of studying narrowly and interestedly the face and figure, which to her girlish, unsophisticated ideas assumed the very perfection of manly beauty—this Gordon Noble, this utter stranger.

In years he was perhaps about six-and-twenty, with clean-cut features, and a wide, low, suntanned brow—looking as though he lived much in the open air. His round brown throat was beardless, and his tawny hair, close-cropped, had a curly glint in it.

Even the long tan-coloured, drooping moustache could not wholly hide the almost womanly sweetness of expression that lurked about his mouth—on his lips, and at the corners of them. It was scarcely the mouth of a man, thought Linnet insensibly, it was so red and perfectly-formed.

Hitherto existence for Linnet Lethbridge had been very quiet—absolutely uneventful. Never before in all her brief life had she met with such beauty and strength so faultlessly united in one.

Watching him furtively as the train sped on, she wondered dimly if across the pathway of that new life which was yet to be faced, this Gordon Noble himself would ever come?

Should his own home happen to be in the neighbourhood of Dreadmere Abbey, she must of necessity meet him occasionally, particularly if he was an intimate friend of Lord Bourdillon and the Countess, Linnet told herself simply. And somehow in the bare thought there was an infinite gentle satisfaction.

It would be so pleasant to have such a friend as he, thought Linnet—a friend so kind, and strong, and true.

Yes, she was sure, quite sure, somehow, that he was *true*.

Mr. Noble, discerning that his young charge was really weary, drew forth from a pocket of his light dust-coat a *Times* newspaper, and proceeded forthwith to screen himself behind the stiff broad sheets, thus leaving Linnet considerately to her own cogitations.

There was only one other traveller in the carriage besides themselves—a pompous-looking old gentleman with gold-rimmed *pince nez*. He also had a paper, which he crackled and scowled over at intervals.

Linnet's seat was easy and luxurious, and the changing views and objects which met her dreaming gaze from the carriage window were pastoral and soothing in the extreme—amber cornfields and muscular reapers, with gleaming sickles grasped in their brawny hands; brown-tinted children, all regardless of the down-beating sun, sprawling and sleeping under the heavy stooks of the farmer's corn; a boy plodding over the stubble, whistling and carrying a dripping wooden beer-bottle; a huge waggon piled high with golden grain which the cart-horses were dragging heavily towards the farm not far from the fields, where the faint blue house-smoke curled upward between the ricks and trees.

Flowering hedge-rows and green meadows with running streams, where the cattle stood meekly in the cool and pebbly shallows, swinging their long tails lazily to and fro.

Dull looking cottages, and cottages thrifty and happy-looking. Cottages with gardens, and cottages without them. Homesteads with stout ricks and straw-cocks, over which the sparrows, flew in clouds, and with poultry strutting blithely in the littered yards, waiting until the sun should go down for the night.

Presently Linnet closed her eyes; forgot where she was—forgot to view the pleasant country scenes through which they were rushing so fast. She closed her eyes instinctively, and a vision of past days as it were took shape then before them.

She saw herself once more as a little child, with a home near the coast of a southern county—a child whose doting mother, happily, was in England with her at home; whose brave father, unhappily, was a soldier far away, fighting in burning India.

She beheld herself, next, as a youthful scholar—a tiny disciple whose only teacher and monitor in all things was the gentle, patient, educated mother who still was watching and hoping for the brave father's return.

Ere long she saw herself in the character of a would-be comforter, endeavouring vainly to assuage a bitter grief—a sudden blow which had plunged a hoping, waiting, joyfully-expectant heart into the awful desolation and loneliness of early widowhood.

Thus it had been that she could never recollect her own father. She was an infant when Colonel Lethbridge left England for India; and the brave soldier-father had never returned to home, wife, and child.

Then—oh, last sad change of all!—she beheld herself as a solitary young mourner, bending despairingly over a bed of death!

"Linnet," breathed the dying woman, "I am going fast to him whom you cannot remember, dear. He and I will be together again after long and dreary years of cruel separation; and if it were not for the thought that I am leaving you, little Linnet, alone, quite alone, behind me, I should be more than happy to go. As it is—" here the poor mother sobbed weakly, and her speech broke off—"Oh, Linnet, darling, what is to become of you when I am no longer here!"

Linnet did not know and could not answer. But she felt as though death with that beloved mother would be infinitely preferable to life without her.

They had few real friends in the little Somersetshire town where they lived, and in the wide world beyond it even still fewer relatives.

Linnet and her mother had ever been all in all in life to each other, and neither of them could remember the name of anyone to whom the young orphan might turn for solace and shelter in the hour of dread bereavement which was then so near at hand—not one who might be willing to offer her a permanent corner by their hearth.

And young as she was, Linnet could not dwell alone.

"Yet there is, after all, I believe, *one*, and only one in this world, who would take you, and love you, and shelter you always, Linnet, for my sake," Mrs. Lethbridge had said at last, "and that one good Samaritan, you know, is your godmother—once the nearest and dearest friend of my vanished youth. I mean Lady Bourdillon. I have not seen her for years, though she lives at Dreadmere still. But you know how often I have spoken of her to you, Linnet. My darling, you must write to the Countess without delay. She, I trust and believe with all my heart, will give you a home at the Abbey—will cherish and love you, Linnet, as though you were a daughter of her own."

And so in that hour of direst need, Linnet, at the dictation of her dying parent, had written

to the Countess, her godmother; but when Lady Bourdillon's reply arrived, the friend of her youth was lying cold and silent for ever.

To the last, however, Mrs. Lethbridge prayed and trusted that the Countess's answer might be favourable to her request, and the widow's prayer was granted.

Lady Bourdillon herself had always been more or less of a myth to Linnet, though the Countess's name, from her childhood upward, had been familiar enough in her ears through hearing it so frequently on her mother's lips.

Linnet had heard, too, that the Bourdillon family, a proud as well as a very ancient one, had been famous for good deeds, as well as notorious for bad ones; that the good deeds unhappily, had been few and far between, and the evil ones, alas, numerous indeed!

She had listened with something like awe to the old traditions of the Bourdillon family which her mother had been won't sometimes to tell her, as a child, in the quiet winter gloaming before tea; had listened with breathless interest to the various legends of the old mansion where the Bourdillons had lived and died over a marvellous stretch of years amounting to centuries.

And, lastly, Linnet had heard, darkly and mysteriously, so to say, of the wild, reckless life and evil doings of Derrick Bourdillon, "the black Earl," the Countess's only son, who, ever absent from his home, it was rumoured, where his presence was so sorely needed, was squandering madly his own inheritance, and the funds a more prudent father had saved and hoarded before him.

For the old lord of Dreadmere was dead, and the young one reigned; and the Countess, in her stately widowhood, was left all alone to sigh and mourn with a breaking heart over the perverted course of a prodigal son.

To Linnet it was a family shrouded in mystery and romance, a race to dream of, to wonder over, and to pity; and when, about a month subsequent to her mother's death, everything being settled—after which settlement she was thankful to find herself not quite so poor as she had expected to be—she was prepared to leave for ever the place where she had been born and reared, she scarcely knew whether she was glad or frightened to be almost on the threshold of the Abbey at last!

"Agglestone!" a voice was shouting somewhere outside the carriage.

And within it Gordon Noble was saying quietly: "This is Agglestone station, and our destination. Are you asleep, Miss Lethbridge?"

Linnet roused herself then, and put up her dusty black veil.

"I think I really must have been," said she, her little pale dark face colouring. "Is this our journey's end?"

"Yes," said Gordon, "this is Agglestone. Yonder, you see, by the white palings, stands the carriage from the Abbey, waiting to take us on to Dreadmere."

Linnet was looking thoughtfully out of the window when the train stopped; and then the guard threw open the door, and Gordon Noble helped her out.

As for the old gentleman in the farther corner, he never moved. Few passengers besides Linnet and Mr. Noble alighted at Agglestone Station.

"Let me take you out to the carriage first; afterwards I will attend to your luggage myself," Mr. Noble said to Linnet. "This way."

She followed him wearily along the whole length of the white-boarded station, with its gaudy flower beds, and nasturtium borders marked neatly round with flints, and out there into the country road where, in the early dusk, a lumbering family coach, open at the top, with a pair of dappled grays, was waiting by the palings beyond the station.

He left her seated in the great old carriage, and returned, accompanied by a chocolate-liveried footman, to the narrow wayside platform.

Five minutes later Mr. Noble was seated in the carriage beside Linnet, the luggage was packed in the luggage-cart, and the fat old powdered coachman and his long-skirted fellow were perched together upon the chariot box.

The evening shadows were already deepening, the line of vermilion in the west was paling gradually into darkness.

A few harvest-folk and gleaners straggled homeward past the carriage as it stood.

The men touched their hat-brims to Gordon Noble, and the women curtsied low.

From the station, as the train steamed slowly out of it, a clock struck the hour of seven.

"Is it indeed so late?" exclaimed Linnet involuntarily.

"Yes," smiled Gordon, "that is the right hour. Are you comfortable, Miss Lethbridge?"

"Thank you, perfectly," replied she.

"Home!" called Gordon to the men-servants on the box. And again they moved on.

CHAPTER II.

Now between majestically-wooded hills with dewy mists enwreathing them—along a broad, hedge-bordered turnpike-road from which the dust was scattered by the heavy coach-wheels.

The evening sky above their heads was purple now, with the western glory gone; the darkness stealing around the hedges warned them that September nights grow sombre quickly.

Struggling radiantly through a thicket on their left was the bold clear light of the harvest-moon.

"Is the Abbey far from the town of Agglestone?" Linnet asked her companion, timidly.

"A little more than a mile," Gordon informed her. "But Agglestone is merely a village, you know."

Even as he spoke, they came upon the beginning of a massive brick wall clothed partly with ivy, and topped by the branches of the huge trees which grew on the other side of it.

"Here is the park," added Gordon Noble. "A quarter of a mile or so farther on, and we shall reach the lodge-gates. Agglestone village proper lies in that direction."

And he indicated a side road and hand-post past which they were then rolling in the heavy old chariot.

As they turned in at the park gates Linnet had time to observe that the lodge itself even resembled a miniature Abbey. Its little cell-like casements peeped out from a wealth of ivy, and other creepers embowered the porch and crowned the low gabled roof.

The pillars of the ponderous gates were surmounted by griffins' heads, which looked in the gathering gloom as if they were mouthing and snarling across at each other.

Once in the parkland the dusk seemed to close in all at once; the trees were thick overhead; and a sudden stillness appeared to have settled on everything around, poor little Linnet thought with a shiver.

The chariot-wheels made less noise here than on the hard public road they had left; they rolled more easily and softly; and Linnet fancied that the ground of the avenue must be grassy and moss-grown, and possibly seldom traversed.

Yet the muffled sound which the swift wheels made was sufficient to scare some solitary bird of night, which, fluttering heavily from an overhanging branch, flew with a weird hoarse croaking noise to a bough farther on.

It seemed to Linnet that there was an air of extreme sadness about the place everywhere, as they drew nearer and nearer to the Abbey; and the young girl shivered again in spite of herself.

"You are chilly as well as tired, I can plainly see," Mr. Noble said kindly. "Never mind, Miss Lethbridge—you shall rest to your heart's content in a very few moments now."

Round a broad curve or sweep of the drive they approached the front of a huge irregular stone building, which in the twilight looked solemn and beautiful.

The harvest-moon shone palely on some of the lattices, and Linnet thought that they looked like the windows of some lovely old church or cathedral.

There was a gloomy porch over the door, but there were no steps to ascend—the great door opened flatly out on to a wide square of stone paving, which struck ice-cold to Linnet's tired little feet.

Passing through the entrance lobby, Linnet was met at once on the threshold of the hall by her dead mother's friend, Lady Bourdillon, the godmother whom she had never seen before.

In an instant the timid glance of her eyes took in completely the picture that rose as it were before them.

Every detail of it does she remember clearly to this day—though many a long year has passed over her head since that night.

A lofty, antique chamber—that hall at Dreadmere Abbey—lighted dimly by a chandelier depending from the Gothic roof. The great carved stairway winding upward on one side was shrouded mysteriously in shadow and gloom.

Oaken panelling and oaken doors darkened the great hall all round, and the Persian rugs and wild-beast skins were deliciously soft under foot.

Advancing towards Linnet there came a dame of high degree, attired in a trailing gown of gleaming black satin, with a good deal of priceless lace crowning and draping her silver-white hair.

The black-satin robe was open at the throat, being relieved and softened there by the snowy fine folds of a picturesque lace neckerchief.

The carriage of the dame was stately, not to say proud, and her face beautiful, Linnet thought—a face it was with thin, aquiline features, and the mouth a little stern, the sloe black brows and eyes and colourless ivory skin contrasting forcibly with the silver-white hair.

It was a face that was no stranger to suffering and pain—stern patience and resignation were stamped there upon the Countess's cold pale brow.

The yellow wrinkled hands were extended to Linnet, and the jewels on them flashed as the rings caught the rays of the waxen lights in the chandelier overhead.

Linnet nearly gasped as she remembered what a shabby little figure she must appear, standing there before her Countess godmother all shy and dusty and insignificant. But Lady Bourdillon spoke, and soon put the poor child at her ease.

"So Gordon has brought you safely here," she said; and the accompanying smile was very warm and earnest. "You are welcome indeed to Dreadmere Abbey, Lynnette; and although I am a staid and particular old woman, you must try to feel at home with me as soon as you can, my dear. Do you think that you will find the task a hard one, Lynnette?"

Then she kissed the young girl, and the kind words brought the ready tears to her eyes. She threw her arms impulsively around the Countess's neck, and drew down the stately, silvery head to a level with her own.

"You are very, very good to me, Lady Bourdillon," she whispered gratefully, through her tears; "and thank you a thousand times for welcoming me so kindly."

"I shall love you for your mother's sake," the Countess said. "You are very like what she used to be when we were girls together—small, slight, and dark. Yes, for her dear sake," she added gently, "you are very welcome, Lynnette."

"'Linnet,' if you do not mind," said the young girl beseechingly. "The name that way suits me better, far better, than the other. Dear mother herself always said so, and never called me Lynnette."

"Yes, Lynnette was her own name, of course," said the Countess softly, while the stern lips parted again in a smile that was half tender, half sad. "Linnet is a curious abbreviation for the other, my dear."

"But I should feel unlike myself if you called me anything else," declared Linnet Lethbridge, humbly.

And the Countess kissed her again, and promised to remember in the future.

As she spoke, Mr. Gordon Noble hastened in from a colloquy with the coachman.

Lady Bourdillon's dark eyes, resting on Gordon, seemed to brighten and look less worn, Linnet could not fail to observe.

"I have come in only to say good-night," he observed cheerily. "Now that I have conveyed Miss Lethbridge safely into your keeping, Lady Bourdillon, my services are no longer required."

And he laughed that pleasant laugh of his.

"Oh, but surely, Gordon, you will stay and dine with us?" persuaded the Countess, with a distressed look. "Why need you return home yet? It is but a quarter to eight now. Stay, Gordon—please!"

"Thank you, I must not," he answered his deep blue eyes quite serious now. "Irene is all alone to-night—and the whole day she has spent by herself, you know, Lady Bourdillon. When I left this morning I promised her that I would get back to Windywaste just as early as I possibly could. If I may, I will bring her over to the Abbey for luncheon to-morrow, and introduce her to Miss Lethbridge. You will like Irene, I think, Miss Lethbridge," he added, turning to Linnet. "She is the dearest and most lovable girl in the world."

"Is she?" returned Linnet vaguely, a little chilly feeling just touching her heart unaccountably, as she wondered almost insensibly who this Irene might be.

"Yes—*I* think so," he smiled, "which perhaps however in the circumstances is only natural. Well, good-night, Miss Lethbridge—good-night, Lady Bourdillon. You will see me as usual in the morning."

And then he opened for himself the massive lobby door, and passed out into the utter stillness and moonlight beyond.

Linnet, at her bidding, followed the Countess into a lofty reception-room. Like the great Gothic hall, it was lighted dimly by wax candles only, and had several lozenge-shaped windows down the whole length of one side of it.

All the furniture it contained was of a bygone date, with a certain depressing air of old-world splendour over everything, suggestive of the manners and fancies of a century or so ago.

Once in this sombre apartment—evidently a drawing-room of its kind—and alone with the Countess there, Linnet's severely restrained curiosity could no longer be kept in bounds.

"Lady Bourdillon," said she, in her pretty timid way, "may I ask the question? Who is Mr. Gordon Noble? And why did he, a total stranger, meet me in London to-day?"

Linnet noticed that the Countess's thin lips became thinner—that her black eyes gleamed almost fiercely under their fine, arched dark brows.

But after a slight pause, she answered gently enough,—

"It is only natural that you should desire to know, Linnet; so I will tell you. Gordon Noble is to me what—what—" and again she paused, turning her face from Linnet—"what my own son should properly be; that is, my adviser, my manager, my protector in all things. Without Gordon Noble, the estate of Dreadmere Abbey would be in a simply ruined condition, and everything would be lost—lost irretrievably. Gordon is its saviour. He is brain and right hand to me. He is Derrick's best friend. But," trying to speak lightly, though the pain was deeper than ever in her eyes, "you are tired out, I can see, dear child. You must have some tea now, and retire to bed immediately after dinner. You shall hear more about Gordon Noble to-morrow."

"And—and who is Irene?" questioned Linnet, speaking on the impulse of the moment.

"Irene Noble—his sister—a twin-sister to whom he is devotedly attached. They live at Windywaste together."

"What a singular name!" said little Linnet, opening her eyes. "Is that their home, then, Lady Bourdillon?"

"Yes, my dear; they live there. And now not another question—I will not allow it. You shall go at once to your room."

And the Countess pulled the bell-rope peremptorily.

The bell was answered by a serving-woman—a neat, plainly-dressed, homely-looking servant, of about thirty years, of a rather grim countenance, hard but honest.

"Phœbe," said the Countess, "be so good as to show Miss Lethbridge upstairs, and get her some tea. Linnet, my dear, I am waiting dinner for you, so do not be long. Still, if you would rather not come down again to-night, tell me so. I should be glad of your society, however, if you are not too fatigued?"

She looked wistfully at the young girl as she spoke.

Linnet was already at the door with Phœbe. Yards lay between the Countess and herself, and yet Linnet could see that the tears were glistening in those dark stern eyes of her godmother.

"Indeed—indeed I would rather come down to you," she said earnestly; and the Countess, she felt, was pleased at her decision.

"Her ladyship is awful lonely, ma'am," remarked the stolid Phœbe, freely, albeit respectfully, as she conducted the young stranger across the gloomy Gothic hall and up the great shallow stairway to the panelled gallery above, "and 'tis truly a good thing that you have come to the Abbey to bear her company. It is only right and proper that she should have someone young and cheerful about her constant-like; and of course Miss Irene, you know, cannot be at the Abbey with her ladyship always; because she's got Mr. Gordon to look after at home yonder, at Windywaste."

"I see," assented Linnet, absently. "Who are you, Phœbe, may I inquire?—not, I think, the housekeeper?"

"No, ma'am. I'm Phœbe Slack, the Countess's own maid. I am Mrs Kidd's niece, though; and my aunt Mrs. Kidd is the housekeeper at the Abbey."

"Oh, I see," said Linnet again. "What a fine old place this is, Phœbe! Why, the farther one gets into it, the more church-like it appears to be!"

"Yes, ma'am," agreed Phœbe—and from that evening henceforward she always called poor little Linnet "ma'am"—"and one part of the building *was* a church once upon a time; leastways a chapel. But it is all in ruins, now, and isn't of no use whatever."

They were in the principal corridor upstairs as Phœbe spoke, in which were entrances to other passages, and many stout oaken doors likewise. Presently they turned a corner and proceeded down a narrower corridor, which terminated in a large uncovered window, arched and latticed and stained gloriously in the upper panes.

Linnet discovered that, like all the rest of the house, her own apartments were old-fashioned and quaintly furnished in the extreme, and scented with lavender and *pot-pourri*.

Phœbe lighted the candles upon the spindle-legged dressing-table, and then turned her grim, hard countenance on Linnet.

"What can I do for you, ma'am?" she inquired, in her stolid way. "Can I unpack for you or anything? Your trunks are in the dressing-room?"

"Oh, no!" said Linnet, almost alarmed at the bare idea. "I would much rather wait on myself, thank you. I have been accustomed to do so all my life long."

"Very good, ma'am," returned Phœbe. "Will you be able to find your way down alone, ma'am, do you think?"

"I think so. But if I *should* lose myself, Phœbe, I shall scream out, and I daresay someone will hear me," said Linnet, rather nervously.

"I am not sure of that, ma'am," rejoined Phœbe, grimly, "because, you see, we are all so far away. You are sure that I cannot help you?"

"Oh, quite sure, thank you!"

"Then I will go and get your tea, ma'am."

Phœbe Slack had already reached the bedroom door, when the sensation of curiosity, which somehow she could not restrain, prompted Linnet to say, hurriedly:

"Phœbe—wait one moment, please!"

"Certainly, ma'am."

"Phœbe—tell me—I should like to know. Is—is Lord Bourdillon himself at home? Is he in the house to-night?" Linnet asked.

Phœbe stared at her questioner in a sort of scared incredulous fashion.

"I—I beg your pardon, ma'am," she stammered at last, "but did you really say——"

Linnet looked at her, wonderingly.

"I only asked you whether the Earl—the Countess's son—Lord Bourdillon were at home and in the house or not," she said.

Then Phœbe Slack cast a frightened glance over her shoulder, and her hard features grew pale as ashes.

"No," she breathed then, "and thank Heaven for it, say I! Oh, gracious goodness, Miss Lethbridge, if you haven't been and made me almost afraid to go back through those dark horrible passages all alone! Why *did* you go and mention his lordship's name," whimpered Phœbe, —"and me up here with only this blessed night-lamp in my hand! I shall start and shriek at every shadow I see—I shall—and have the cold shivers all night now!"

Linnet gazed at the serving-woman in speechless amazement; on account of her freedom of manner for one thing, and because of her extraordinary language for another.

And she had but uttered the name of Derrick Bourdillon, the Countess's son, Phœbe's master, and the lord of Dreadmere Abbey!

What did it mean? Was Phœbe Slack going out of her mind, or was she crazed already?

"That will do Phœbe, thank you," Linnet said then, as stiffly as she knew how—"I can manage alone, now. You may go."

And Phœbe went; looking, as little Linnet thought, simply scared out of her wits.

And then Linnet began to feel frightened too—a prey to a burthen of troubled thoughts, and wild dim fancies concerning this desolate old home, the evil master of which she had yet to know!

Somehow, even at that early date, she dreaded the inevitable meeting with Derrick Bourdillon.

And now Phœbe—that foolish Phœbe Slack—had rendered matters infinitely worse!

Though Linnet knew it not, the black Earl's shadow lay already across her path!

(To be continued.)

ELSIE, THE ORPHAN.

—:o:—

It was in the flowery month of May, and every girl in the "Home" had brought a little knot of violets to Elsie Vaughan's room—a sort of farewell offering, rendered with many tears and kisses, for this, of all days, was the day that Elsie was going away—Elsie, who had grown up in their midst, who had even taught in the little school and taken music lessons at the same piano with the matron's niece.

Elsie was in rare luck. She was to be companion to a rich and somewhat capricious lady, who wanted a sort of live plaything that should be more even-tempered than her parrot and prettier than her Skye terrier.

Mrs. Mifflin had visited the "Home," and there had chanced to see Elsie conducting her little kinder-garten class, a tall, fair young girl, with limpid gray eyes, brown hair waving away from a low forehead, and small, straight features.

"She's like my dead Marian," sobbed Mrs. Mifflin. "She's exactly what my Marian would have grown up to be."

And so Mrs. Mifflin promptly adopted Elsie Vaughan, and the girl found herself transformed, with startling suddenness, from a friendless waif sheltered by the bleak walls of an orphan's home, to the petted darling of a Fifth Avenue palace.

"Think of it," said the matron, lugubriously, shaking out the folds of her pocket-handkerchief. "Ten years this very blessed day since that dear old Doctor Evelyn brought you from the hospital, where your poor ma died, crying your darling eyes out, with a big rag doll in your arms, and a scarlet cap, for all the world like Little Red Riding Hood. And says he, 'Stay here with this kind lady, my dear, to tea,' says he, 'and

I'll come back for you to-morrow.' And then ——"

"That wasn't quite the way of it, Aunt Abby," said the niece, laughing. "The doctor sat out in his carriage, and Mr. Edgar Evelyn brought Elsie in, crying and hugging her doll. And he kissed her good-by—he, a grown young gentleman, with the handsomest moustache I ever saw. And says he:

"'Don't fret, child; I'm coming back after you one of these days.'

"'To marry me?' says Elsie, stopping her sobs all at once.

"'Of course,' says he. 'When you're big enough.'"

"And Elsie's been looking out for him ever since," said Rachel Nairn, the next oldest girl, not without a certain infusion of malice in her tone.

Elsie smiled a cold, moonlight sort of smile.

"Children are such unreasoning creatures," said she. "Of course, they all have to be wheedled into coming here at first; but Mrs. Garrett is so kind, they're always glad to stay!" and the moonlight of the smile changed to the softest sunshine as she stooped her tall head to kiss the matron's apple-face. "People talk about an orphan's lot being so desolate, but I have always been a happy orphan here!"

So she stepped into the Mifflin carriage, as royally as any princess might have done, and drove away over the wild violets that the infant class had picturesquely scattered along the road—for everyone loved Elsie at the Home.

At Mrs. Mifflin's the road of life was still carpeted with flowers for this adopted daughter, and the first thing the old lady did was to vindicate her claim to womanhood by turning matchmaker.

"I'm sure, my dear," said she, "that he is in love with you. Of course I've heard some sort of a rumour of some girl in his native place that he was fond of; but only think of it, he has lived abroad for ten years! And that English cousin of his, whose estates he has inherited, was most anxious for him to marry well. You like him—don't you, Elsie?"

"Yes, I like him, mamma."

For the old lady had insisted on Elsie's calling her by the sweet maternal name.

"Couldn't you teach yourself to love him, darling?" she coaxed.

Elsie smiled a little, as she plucked a full-blown rose from the conservatory wall.

"I must wait until I am asked for that," said she.

"A girl can teach herself almost anything, Elsie," pleaded the old lady, with wistful eyes.

"But not that, mamma."

"You are so cold, so calm, so like a statue of snow," fretted Mrs. Mifflin, "I sometimes wonder if you have a heart, Elsie."

There could scarcely have been any doubt in her mind as to this point, could she have looked into the lilac-and-gold boudoir, where Elsie paced up and down in her ball-gown, that night, with diamond stars in her hair and a cluster of crushed roses in her bosom, her hands twisted together, the curls pushed away from her forehead.

"I love him! I love him! I love him!" she repeated to herself. "Oh, heaven, that I should have surrendered my heart so blindly to one who has never asked for it!"

But the next evening, when Mr. Colbridge met Elsie at a fashionable *musicale*, he led her into the secluded palm-house, a silent, fragrant spot, with an arched glass roof overhead, and here and there the golden star of an incandescent light.

"Do you care for the music?" he asked wistfully. "Wouldn't you rather sit here by this marble-edged fountain? Besides, I have something to tell you."

Elsie murmured some inaudible reply.

The fragrance of the lotus blooms, the drip of the falling water, the consciousness of Colbridge's presence, all combined to make a sort of dream. Well, so let it be. It could not last long now.

Side by side they sat in the pearly sparkle of the incandescent lights. The lotus buds swam on the water, a palm-tree swayed in some unseen draught. Colbridge broke the silence with an effort.

"Did you ever see a ghost?" said he.

Elsie started.

"A ghost?" she repeated.

"Yes—the ghost of an unfulfilled duty," he spoke, with a hard laugh. "I saw one last night. I had mapped out my path in life, but there, directly across the road, stood the ghost. Years ago, Miss Mifflin, I engaged myself to a girl, partly by way of joke——"

"Such things are never—a joke," said Elsie, watching the lotus buds sway to and fro.

"No, I know. I had nearly forgotten it. I suppose she has quite forgotten it. She was only a child, you know. But then across my road the ghost beckons me—the ghost of that old-time vow!"

Both were silent for a moment.

"Miss Mifflin, you shall be my conscience," said Colbridge, passionately. "By your verdict I will abide. Am I to abandon my life's brightest future all for the sake of a careless word spoken years ago?"

And then, like a penitent of old, breathing out the secrets of his heart in the confessional cell, Colbridge told Elsie all.

She sat listening, like the snow statue to which her adopted mother had compared her.

"So," he concluded, abruptly, "I am going there to-morrow to redeem my troth, if you tell me that it must be so."

"It must be so," she said, calmly.

"Elsie! And you pronounce the sentence!"

Her head drooped; her face was very pale in the electric lights.

Only a second and then the palm-house was full of gay figures, and her hostess was beside her, begging her to sing Beethoven's "Adelaide."

"Only for one day, Mrs. Garrett," said Elsie, "let me be among you as I was before—the teacher of the kindergarten class, in my old brown gown like a robin's plumage. Happy? Yes, of course I am happy; but I want to be Elsie, the orphan, again just for one sweet day. Nobody must ask any questions, nobody must be surprised; only let me have my way."

"Well, I never did!" said Mrs. Garrett.

And when the noontime came, the little children ran out into the fields again, just as they had done a year ago, to gather violets for Miss Vaughan.

"I dreamed about her last week," said Freda Hopgood, the yellow-headed prize scholar, "so I 'most knew she was coming back."

But the violet baskets were not half filled, when there came a tap at the great lion-headed knocker on the door.

Elsie, sitting in the sunshine, with her cheeks rose-red and her old brown gown belted around her slim waist, started a little.

"Miss Elsie Vaughan?" Mrs. Garrett's strident voice repeated. "Is she to home? Well, yes—no. She's been gone a year, but—she's to home now. I don't know, really, how I'm going to make you understand. She ain't an orphan no longer—that is— Why, yes, I s'pose you can walk in. She's here."

Tall and stately, like Sir Galahad of old, Mr. Colbridge entered the school-room, where the little slates were piled and the blackboard yet bore signs of a lengthened encounter with "simple division."

The teacher rose up to meet him, her limpid eyes shining, her face all alight, both hands held out.

"My love of eleven years ago," she said, softly, "you have come to take me away."

He stood a second as if incredulous of the testimony of his own eyes.

"Elsie!" he gasped.

"Edgar Evelyn," she said joyously, "I knew you long ago, though the little orphan girl had grown out of your memory. I have loved you all this time, and I am here waiting for you to redeem your promise."

"But, Miss Mifflin——"

"I am not Miss Mifflin. They called me by that name when they adopted me, but I am little Elsie Vaughan, all the same—the little Elsie who has never left off loving Edgar Evelyn all this time, though the heir of the Colbridge's has stepped into his place. Oh, my darling, if you had played the poor little orphan false, I never, never could have loved you as I do now."

"Children" said Mrs. Garrett, intercepting the shouting troop at the outside door, "don't take your violets in just now. Miss Vaughan has a friend with her."

She spoke in carefully guarded accents, but it was not three minutes before everybody in the Home for Orphans knew all about Elsie's love story.

And when Mr. Colbridge took her away, the children were all waving their tiny handkerchiefs on the doorstep, and the buggy wheels rolled over heaps and heaps of blue violets.

And Mrs. Mifflin, when she saw her, cried out rapturously,—

"Oh, Mr. Colbridge, I am so glad. Our snow statue has found her heart at last!"

CINDERELLA.

—:o:—

CHAPTER XXXIV.—(*continued.*)

No wonder she drove a hard bargain with such prospects in store. The Count had calmly, and with befitting suppressions and amendments given a sketch of the true state of affairs, and although Phœbe, with some lingering sparks of humanity in her bosom, called him a scoundrel and a rascal (to herself), yet she prudently added "What was done was done."

The girl was deprived—for the present, anyhow—of her reason. It would be all the same to her where she was, for she had no sense to know.

Her money was no use to her now, and lots of people wanted it badly. She would be comfortable enough with her, that she would for certain. And as the job was going, she (Phœbe) might just as well have the handling of the money as any one else. Nay, better, for was she not an old family servant, and remembered Cinderella's mother?

Thus she silenced her own doubts, throttled her too-clamorous conscience, and clasped hands in the bargain.

Next she bustled about, and got breakfast, made herself smart, and tripped over for the apothecary, whilst Lorenza devoured an ample meal.

His night's row had made him hungry. He retired cautiously out of the room when the little shrivelled knock-kneed timid-looking apothecary made his appearance to examine Phœbe's niece, who had always been queer in her head, and had had a fall getting out of a cart, coming over to her aunt's the evening before.

Thus was the story poured forth quite glibly, with every appearance of truth to the sympathetic, deluded little medicine man, who nodded his head and lengthened his face at every sentence, and then turned to examine the insensible, or sleeping object on the sofa.

"Dear, dear, dear," he ejaculated, as he carefully removed the bandage. "Aye, this is very bad! It," interrogatively, "looks more like a blow than a fall. A blow from behind, eh?"

"Blow!—what nonsense! Do you think she's bad? She's not going to die, is she?" anxiously, as she thought of her large bonus depending on Pauline's life.

"Well, I can't say," very cautiously. "I would not like to say. It's in a very awkward place. It ought to have been seen to before too. Last night, you said?" raising his brows.

"Yes, last night," she echoed, truthfully.

"Hum! And you say her head has always been queer—eh?"

"Always queer," responded Phœbe, not so truthfully.

"Well, anyway, this'll settle her—what little senses she has. The brain is touched—the brain is a ticklish organ, very sensitive. She will probably lose the power of speech and become a dummy!"

"A dummy always?" echoed Mrs. Fleming.

A solemn nod of his grey head was the apothecary's only reply.

"And she must be put to bed at once. Keep her here after I have bandaged her head—low

and cooling drinks, and all her hair must come off at once!"

"Then, Mr. Pierson, you think she'll never have her wits again?" said Phœbe, standing beside him with lint and scissors, "aye?"

"Think, I'm sure of it. She's never had much, you say? Idiots are a great trial!" feelingly. "If she was to be taken—she will if fever supervenes—it would be a blessing for herself and you!" thinking, poor man, that he was saying quite the right and friendly thing.

But Phœbe did not see the matter in this light, and took him up, as he said afterwards, "uncommon sharp."

The patient was bandaged, was shorn, was put to bed, and then her nurse hastened out to the garden, bearing tidings to the anxious Count.

The verdict was, to his great relief, "for life," and thus fortified for any unpleasant contingency, he presently took his departure.

The hue-and-cry, the hubbub, the town's talk, would be great, as he knew, on the subject of Lady Curzon's mysterious disappearance.

And little did any of the most imaginative dream of her whereabouts; and, indeed, it would be hard to recognise in Polly Carson Mrs., (she took brevet rank) Patterson's crazy niece, who was occasionally seen, with her cropped head and shabby shawl and stoop; slowly pacing the back garden under her aunt's superintendence, the once brilliant, distinguished, intellectual, Pauline Curzon.

It looked very much as if the apothecary was right—as if that two hundred pounds was an annual certainty to the respectable disinterested Phœbe, and that it was "for life."

CHAPTER XXXV.

In time Polly Carson obtained admittance into the county asylum as Phœbe's niece, and on payment of a small annual sum, and Phœbe had her heart's desire, the two storeyed house, venetian blinds, and all.

When miserable William Jones happened to decry this august and important lady in the distance he no longer dared face her. He fled down an ally or dived into the nearest shop.

What a fool he had been! he told himself ten times a day; why, Phœbe was rolling in riches, and lived like a queen!

He was very sharp, querulous, and altogether unpleasant to his blue-eyed, but now rather faded Kitty, as he dwelt upon, and, indeed, more than once expounded at length, "what might have been." Did Phœbe but know it her revenge was complete.

To return to Polly Carson.

She was very quiet, very tractable, very inanimate and dumb. She seemed to have no memory whatever.

She was "just like a statue," quoth the matron, who could move and hear, and know what she was told.

There was comfort in this; but it was certainly very strange that, for a farmer's daughter, she should be so utterly and completely at sea when set down on her knees with pail and brush to scrub the wards.

True, her hands were wonderfully shaped, and white. This her aunt accounted for by her long illness.

Her wedding-ring had disappeared.

No one would have recognised her as she knelt at her work in a lilac print, with short sleeves, and a coarse apron, her hair all cut close round by her ears and, and an absolutely vacant, dazed expression in her once magnificent and speaking dark eyes.

Her cheeks had fallen in, her features were sharpened, her colour entirely gone, her hands reddened and made coarse by her daily and now accustomed task.

Visitors passing by to see more wealthy patients, or those in her own class, had more than once remarked that she was a genteel-looking girl, with a nice figure, and that it was a pity.

No one dreamt for a second that the young woman timidly moving to one side with her brush and pail as they passed by was a Russian Countess and a Baronet's wife!

She was rather a favourite with the nurses, being very quiet, very obedient, and no trouble.

A whole year elapsed, during which Phœbe now and then came to look up her niece, and report progress elsewhere.

"Progress," she declared, "there was none."

But she was wrong. The wish was father to the thought in her case, and a keen eye, a less interested eye, would have seen a slow but sure improvement in the passage washer, Polly Carson.

True, she never spoke; but she had become quicker in her movements. She was not quite such an automaton. There was a look of dawning intelligence in her eyes, like dimmest, faintest daybreak coming over an inky-black horizon—a look as if she was trying to remember something.

It would be a bad day for some people when her memory came back to her again!

For a whole year she made no very great strides towards recovery, but she was taking some slow and sure steps in that direction.

At the end of eighteen months she had been promoted to the laundry, and much preferred the ironing board to the stone flags for her operations, though here, as before, she was at first quite surprisingly clumsy.

One afternoon the laundry was full, most of the inmates were chatting and singing, the "dummy," as she was called, was busily ironing aprons, and had just placed a heater in the fire, before which she stood for a moment, and then, suddenly looking round her with big dark eyes, she spoke.

It was in a low voice, almost a whisper, but she certainly spoke.

Everyone paused and stared in amazement. The maddest there were interested.

She spoke again, a little louder this time, to a hatchet-faced woman beside her, who had the expression on her features of an irritated wolf. This time all heard her; she said,—

"Where am I?"

"Where are you? That's a good idea! So you've found your tongue at last, have you. Where are you, my dear? You're where we all are."

"And that's in the Frogshire County Asylum," screamed a voice from a distant corner. "Don't you know that we are all mad here?" with the laugh of a lunatic Macaw.

"Hush, hush, Jessie," said a nurse, soothingly. "Jessie must be a good girl now. Jessie, Jessie!"

"A good girl!" she shrieked; "why should I be a good girl? I won't be a good girl!" beginning to dance up and down, and, snatching the white curtain she was ironing off the board and tearing it into ribbons with the fury of a wild animal—the screams of a hyena.

"Jessie, Jessie, now, now, now you're a naughty girl. You'll get the jacket if you don't behave yourself," expostulated the nurse, unavailingly.

Jessie was "off."

And Jessie cared nought for her blandishments. She only screamed louder, made a diabolical face at her, and flew at the woman nearest, and fastened her hands in her hair.

What a scene ensued! All the other mad women became wildly excited. They wanted nothing but example. They threw down their work, and screamed, and whooped, and sang, and fought, and danced. It was positively Pandemonium no more and no less.

Polly Carson shrank up against the wall terrified, and trembling in every limb.

Her dawning intelligence accepted the mad woman's statement, backed at once as it was, by such unanswerable illustration.

She screamed when a woman with hair on end, eyes rolling in her head, came suddenly rollicking up to her, poked her face close to hers, and yelled,—

"Yah!"

No wonder the two nurses rang a bell. The tumult was getting worse instead of better, and they were quite incapable to deal with all the lunatics alone.

In less than a minute two big, broad-shouldered men came running in, and the ringleaders were seized—two garments resembling sacks, but, in truth, straight waistcoats—were flung over their heads if spite of the most furious resistance on their part, and once inducted into these articles, their arms pinioned, they became comparatively tame, merely making faces at their captors, and gibbering impotently; and over the other mad women came a silence and a lull—the immediate result of the awful warning before them.

As for Polly Carson, she had fainted, and no wonder. To come to her senses in a lunatic asylum, among a crowd of shrieking maniacs, was almost enough to have deprived her of reason for the remainder of her days. It certainly threw her back.

She recovered from her faint in her normal condition, dumb and dazed, looking as before, and for two or three months she remained in that state, and then again she took steps on the road to recovery.

This time she talked, and whispered, and muttered to herself a good deal. She stared at her reflection very critically in the glass when she dusted out the sub-matron's room, as was now her daily duty.

The head nurse, a sub-matron, was an elderly, cheerful-looking woman, of indomitable nerve, and splendid physique.

She was nevertheless, a good deal startled when one evening, as she sat at her tea, and Polly, her attendant, had just placed a plateful of buttered toast beside her, she, instead of leaving the room, paused at the other side of the table, looked quite wistfully over at her, said, making a visible effort, spoke, and said in a pretty, refined English accent,—

"Please tell me what am I now? What am I doing here?"

If the sideboard, itself, had harangued her, and the teapot broken into song, Mrs. Bint could not have been more astounded; but she answered, presently, in the usual soothing formulæ.

"Why, you are here to get well, my dear, to be sure."

"Get well from—what was it?" putting up her hand to her short locks. "My head—it feels queer still."

"Yes, Polly; but its getting better. There, now, don't be talking of it, nor exciting yourself, and go and fetch me a tin of sardines."

"Yes; but tell me first who brought me here?"

"There's no harm in letting you know that, my dear," helping herself to sugar with her fingers as she spoke. "Why, your best friend, to be sure—your aunt."

"My aunt!" echoed Polly, "my aunt is dead long ago."

"Maybe it was another aunt. Anyway, she comes to see you every now and then. She'll be main glad to hear you have got your speech; that I'm sure she will."

"But I had only one aunt. She died in Paris nearly a year ago, the Princess Sophie Dormanoff."

Mrs. Bint smiled to herself, significantly, as she stirred her tea. These poor creatures were all alike. If it wasn't a Princess, it was a Duchess or a Queen. Had they not Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth in Polly's own ward?—and there was she, the niece of a Princess, of course.

Princess, indeed! That big, red-faced woman, that looked like a cook who was in a good situation, where the perquisites were ample, and the beer on tap under her own care!

"Yes, yes, Polly, of course. I know all that," said Mrs. Bint, in her most mollifying manner. "I know she died in Paris. But now, like a good girl, just run and get those sardines."

"One minute," persisted her attendant, "only one minute. I know my head is queer and has been queer, and I don't remember things quite yet, but they are coming back. I am not this!" stretching out her bare arms and canvas apron. "I am a lady!"

At this Mrs. Bint nodded her head. This was no common hallucination among her patients. She at once acquiesced,—

"Of course you are, my love—a lady born and bred."

"You call me Polly Carson, but my name is Pauline Curzon. It is, indeed, my husband is Sir Philip Curzon. Does he know that I am here?"

"To be sure and certain he does, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Bint with the utmost composure.

This announcement was nothing to others that had been made to her, aye, within that very week.

"He knows it, of course, and when you are well he is coming to take you away, and now, don't be talking and exciting yourself any more; but do go, as you are bid, and fetch me those sardines, or I shall have done my tea before I get them."

And thus dismissed, Polly reluctantly but obediently left the room, whilst Mrs. Bint muttered to herself,—

"So she's found her tongue, and it's the usual thing. Dear, dear me, dear me, they are all the same!"

For some time Pauline made no further effort to regain her own identity, but every day she was becoming more herself.

The early hours, the simple food, the regularity of her life, was telling upon her youth and good constitution.

The more she remembered the more she shrank from her companions. Their society became unbearable at last. Once she realised that she was sane amongst the mad! Every meal was a terror, every night in the ward an agony of apprehension.

How she now loathed those long stone passages, those whitewashed rooms, those great big recreation yards, with sheds and seats for wet weather, where rows of women sat talking and knitting with wonderful lucid intervals, until some small innocent remark was as a spark in tow, and set half a dozen jabbering and screaming like a cage full of cockatoos.

There was Mary Queen of Scots, a tall, very pretty girl of eighteen, whose parents had over-educated an excitable brain, and who walked from ward to ward monarch (in her own opinion) of all she surveyed, with feathers and bits of pink paper and quill pens stuck in her streaming hair.

She had a most lovely voice, and all over the different yards it could be heard high and clear like a bell in the air, penetrating to the "men's side," where it was responded to in kind by an unhappy wretch who promenaded the recreation space all day long, uttering extraordinary sounds, being under the impression that he was a trumpet!

Sometimes Queen Mary came into collision with Queen Elizabeth, a squat, grey-haired old woman, who chewed tobacco and wore a red-checked shawl, and was "handsomely paid for" as she informed her friends in her lucid moments (few and far between).

She had not been over educated, had never so much as heard of Queen Elizabeth, but did not resent the title. What she did resent was occasional furious onslaughts from Queen Mary, who pulled her by her hoary locks and fiercely demanded "How she had dared cut off her head?"

To this Elizabeth replied in kind, and with a shrill request "for that two hundred pounds your father owes me—have it I will," and then a battle royal would ensue that nothing could pacify short of two ward women and threats of the dreaded "jacket."

Here were two hundred gone mad on many subjects, and driven mad by as many different causes; loss of money, loss of children, loss of lovers, drink, accident, sudden alarm, hereditary insanity, were all represented, and in the midst of all these Pauline Curzon walked, and sat, and slept, a sane woman.

A prolonged sojourn, she was convinced, would render her like one of themselves—like that poor wretch shrieking in the next yard in a strait-waistcoat; so she resolved, without further delay, to demand an interview with the matron.

She had asked for it several times very pressingly, and had been put off with such soothing vague, childish excuses as were thought sufficient for an idiot; but she was resolved to carry her point, and declared that if she was denied an interview she would appeal to the doctor and the board.

This sounded rather sensible, and her talk was equally sensible and coherent, so Miss Hitchins vouchsafed to accord her an audience in her own sanctum in the presence of Mrs. Bint.

"Well, Polly," she said, pleasantly, "I'm glad to hear you are so much better. What can I do for you?"

"Let me go; allow me to leave this awful place at once, this hour, or I shall go really mad."

"Why, Polly, Polly, Polly, what is all this?"

"In the first place, Miss Hitchins," she returned, trembling with excitement and nervousness as she spoke, "my name is not Polly, but Pauline Curzon. I am the wife of Sir Philip Curzon"—Miss Hitchins was not the least surprised; if she had announced that she was the wife of the King of the Cannibal Islands she would not have wondered in the least. "I was Pauline Rivers. My sisters live at Mount Rivers. I came down to give them, I mean," correcting herself, "to see them, when, I cannot tell, or at least how long ago—I know it was in August.

"As I left them someone came behind me in the avenue, and gave me a fearful blow, and I recollect nothing till now. It may have been a month ago," glancing hesitatingly out on the autumn-tinted trees, "it might have been a year. I am really and truly Pauline Curzon; I am, indeed. I am rich. If money is of any use to get me free there is plenty."

Here she was so overcome she could say no more, and sat down, trembling and completely unstrung, gazing appealingly from Mrs. Bint to Miss Hitchins, as if searching for some faint hope in either of their placid faces.

"Pauline," said the latter, in a cool, business-like tone of voice, "your story shall be looked to at once. The doctor shall see you. Come here again this day week. Now," touching a hand-bell, "you may go. Be a good girl now, and don't be talking and exciting yourself" (the usual formula).

As Pauline closed the door she said,—

"Well, Bint, what do you think? It's the same old story, is it not? I daresay now she has relieved her mind we won't be troubled with her again—eh? That's one comfort!"

"I'm not so sure of that, mum," said Mrs. Bint sagaciously. "There may be something in it. If you look at her eyes, they are not like them others, but clear and steady; and she speaks like a lady."

"Pooh!"—contemptuously—"that goes for nothing! So does Queen Elizabeth, so does the mermaid, and heaps of others."

"The doctor said it wasn't a usual case when she came," remarked Mrs. Bint, impressively; "that it was all from that blow on the head—an accident, the Count said—and, leastways, she's a very genteel young woman. Look at her feet and hands, and very neat in her ways, and that dainty in her food, just like a real lady!"

"My good Bint, you are bewitched!" said the matron, with a laugh of derision. "Have you not been long enough in the place—fifteen years—not to know a crazy girl when you see her? Don't they all fancy themselves queens and ladies? Don't they all come with some cock-and-bull story, sooner or later?"

"True enough, miss. No doubt every word you say is quite true, and you have great experience, but still, in this case, I would inquire; it can do no harm."

And thus the matter was settled.

Miss Hitchins agreed that would do "no harm," and inquiries were made; but the result of these inquiries were not favourable to Pauline.

It was true that there had been a Lady Curzon, who had disappeared two years previously; and six months before Polly Carson was "put up" in the asylum she had been drowned at sea, so her relations said, and her husband, Sir Philip, was about to be married immediately to a beautiful American girl, a Miss Derwent.

When this intelligence came to Miss Hitchins she sent for Bint, and triumphantly imparted the facts to her without delay, not forgetting to add the agreeable and proverbial "I told you so," and Mrs. Bint was obliged to bear news to Polly Carson "that the inquiries respecting her had not been satisfactory, and there was no use in doing anything more at present."

Whereupon Polly, who had been listening with a ghastly face and wide-open and incredulous eyes, had flung herself down upon Mrs. Bint's capacious sofa, and wept and cried and wrung her hands just exactly like any sane person.

Her grief was so natural, so overwhelming, and yet not loud, or, in the least, like the lunatic outbursts to which she was accustomed that Mrs. Bint was quite touched.

She endeavoured to soothe Polly in quite a motherly fashion; she patted and stroked her hair, and actually invited her to stop and have a cup of tea, to which invitation the miserable Pauline gladly acceded; anything to get away from that awful long table in the refectory, lined with grinning or lowering faces, and garnished with mugs, tin plates, and harmless appointments.

"If you are what you say, Polly, don't you fret; for it will all come right, you take my word for it. And now, here's your tea," said Mrs. Bint, consolingly, cutting the bread and butter herself all the same, and not trusting Polly with a bright steel knife. "You cheer up, and you shall come in here of an evening whenever you please if you're a good girl, and you can bring your sewing, and read a book, and have a chat."

"And may I write letters?" faltered Pauline, eagerly.

"To be sure, my dear. To be sure, of course you may write letters;" knowing well that every letter that was put into the big letter-box was opened and read—and what letters.

Letters to the Queen, letters to the dead, letters of the most extraordinary description and superscription—letters, needless to remark, that were never posted, that never travelled further than the nearest fire, or waste paper-basket.

Among these were Pauline's piteous appeals to Mr. Loraine, to Letty, and to Sir Philip—letters that were, of course, never answered.

Day after day went by, and still she lived on hope. To-morrow would bring an answer, would bring some one, would bring freedom, and time rolled on, and it was always to-morrow, and her heart was sick with hope deferred.

Mrs. Bint's little room was a veritable haven of refuge to Pauline. Here she worked, wrote her letters and read, and was looked upon with some jealousy by the other inmates as "Mrs. Bint's pet."

Here she heard casually of the death of her aunt, which sad occurrence did not affect her in the smallest degree; in fact, she solemnly assured Mrs. Bint that she knew of no such person as Mrs. Phœbe Fleming, unless an old servant that had been at Mount Rivers, and it surely could not be her.

"And do you remember Mount Rivers?" said Mrs. Bint. "What sort of a place is it? Were you brought up there?"

"No, only in a kind of way," rejoined Polly, laying down a pillow-case that she was making for her patroness. "I was brought up at a farm first—Farmer Meadows's."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed Mrs. Bint, growing very red. "Why, that's my brother in Canada. I remember little Missy well, and her fair hair; and dear heart, but they were set upon the child, and she was very good to them when she grew up, never forgot old friends, sent them plenty of money."

"I was Missy, though you may not believe me, Mrs. Bint," said Pauline. "My hair is dark now, but I believe it was gold once, when I was quite a little thing."

"Do you remember anything more?" asked Mrs. Bint, diplomatically.

"I remember kind old Mams, and Isaac, and Dan, and riding on hay carts, and the little teapot with the bird on it."

This last insignificant remark caused Mrs. Bint to open her mouth and eyes in undisguised astonishment. She herself had been the donor of that very article.

A child's memory clings to queer things, and Polly must have seen that teapot as a child, seeing that it had emigrated with the family fully twenty years previously.

Good Mrs. Bint was bewildered, and more and more so as the young woman opposite, in the asylum print dress, dragged forth, bit by bit,

little of the past—vague pictures of names, and people, and dogs, and horses, her sketches rapidly filled in by Mrs. Bint's own more robust recollection.

From the farm Pauline passed to Mount Rivers, lightly touched on her sisters, her school, her aunt, the princess, her wedding, and brought everything down, in fact, to that tragic August afternoon in the avenue at Mount Rivers, leaving out any illusion to Madame Bert, or the rather strained relations between her husband and herself.

It sounded true, and Mrs. Bint's mind was in a perfect chaos. She absolutely was at her wits' end. She shut her eyes and opened them, she rubbed her forehead, she put on and took off her spectacles, and still could not obtain any mental relief.

Was it possible that the young woman sitting before her on the sofa, in the coarse dress, and with the orthodox clipped hair, was actually little Missy, and the wife of a Baronet rolling in riches!

She was very much inclined to think that she was, and hinted as much to Miss Hitchins, who received the suggestion with smiling, tolerant contempt, "and wondered that Mrs. Bint could be so foolish!"

But Mrs. Bint was confirmed in her opinion a few days later, and from thenceforward remained unshaken in her belief, despite of the sneers of her superior. She had, in her way, been communicative to her *protégée*, told her how long she had been in the place—she did not say asylum—two years; gave her particulars of the appearance of her late aunt, and did all she could to throw light upon the mystery. She also lent Polly books, and now and then an odd newspaper.

It was in the latter that Pauline came upon the account of her husband's tragic death. She read it half through before she could realise it and bring home the facts to her mind.

When Mrs. Bint came bustling into the room ten minutes later she found Polly Carson, with the newspaper in her hand, in a faint upon the carpet.

Polly was given to fainting—quite another strong argument in favour of her being a lady, in Mrs. Bint's opinion—and Polly was a long time in coming-to this time. When she did, and was able to speak, she signed to the fatal paper and burst into floods of tears.

She was not at all fond of her husband latterly, as we know; but such a tragic ending affected her, and shocked her almost as much as if she had been as devoted to him as in the year subsequent to her marriage, and before her idol had proved itself to have been made of clay—and of very common clay.

Her grief and her tears were strong weapons against the last barrier of Mrs. Bint's misgivings, and they fell.

She soothed and comforted Pauline to the best of her power, but, poor woman, it seemed an awful case, in which so little could be said. How could she comfort this pretty young widow in a lunatic asylum, this friendless widow of a barbarously murdered husband.

There was just one thing she bethought her of saying, and it was this,—

"My dear, between you and me, and to go no further, I'll tell you that I believe you are as sane as I am."

This announcement she made not at the moment, but a few days later.

"I believe that you are Lady Curzon, that you were little Missy, and that there's been foul play somewhere, as sure as my name's Ann Bint."

"You believe that, really, Mrs. Bint?" exclaimed Pauline, eagerly. "Then I am as good as free; for oh! Mrs. Bint," seizing her by the hand, "if I stay here much longer I shall die. I could not bear it. And if the Board and the doctor refuse to listen to me, and my friends won't assist me, I look to you entirely to help me to run away."

A nice suggestion for a patient to make to the sub-matron of the county asylum, and the matron did not say "nay."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Little did Lorenzo Villaini dream of what was in store for him as a hansom dashed up to his door, and a gentleman, slipping a sovereign into the butler's palm, and muttering the words, "Very old friend, want to give him an agreeable surprise," entered his sanctum, unannounced.

Had a bomb exploded in the doorway he could not have given a greater start than when he lifted his crafty dark eyes and beheld his old enemy, Count Bodisco, who came straightway in, and, without a formal "how-do-ye-do," seated himself in a chair, *vis-à-vis* to his victim, leant back, joined the tips of his fingers together, and said, in an every-day voice,—

"And now, what have you to say for yourself, you scoundrel? The game is up; you are caught this time," fixing his pale eyes on him, intently, as he spoke.

"Caught—game up! nonsense!" ejaculated the other in a blustering tone. "What brings you here? I thought you were in gaol."

"So I was, but I'm out," rejoined his visitor, quite coolly. "It's your turn now," significantly; "and, indeed, if it's only gaol—imprisonment for life, I must compliment you—you are getting off cheap."

"What—what are you driving at?" snarled the other.

"Merely this; you have been a member of us, the Hand of Justice."

Lorenzo paled and winced visibly, it was from the long reaching arm of that iron hand he had been hiding for years.

"Here," producing as he spoke a pocket-book, and turning over the leaves with firm, unfaltering fingers, "are many entries against Lorenzo Villaini—traitor, spy, and renegade. One of such entries alone is sufficient to convict you, and you know the punishment—death!"

Lorenzo shuddered, as well he might.

"Here!" glancing over a book, "you betrayed Korosko. Here we have positive proof that you cheated Stellmacher out of every florin, and subsequently denounced him to the authorities. Here—but the entries are too many to read, you know them, you know, also, that we see and know, and discover every thing—nothing escapes us, and your villainous, muddled brain must often have wondered why you escaped for so long. Know the reason—your sentence was but deferred. I, myself, reserved it for my own reward, the pleasure of ridding the world of such a monster. I was in prison, as you probably knew, and possibly hoped for life. You ventured to London, but you ventured too soon. Bah!" with a gesture of contempt, "it mattered not; we would have found you anywhere—were you to have plunged into the crater of Etna, itself. You are but a miserable ostrich, with your head in the sand, and you know it. Our vengeance may be slow, but no one knows better than yourself that it is sure."

"And are you come to brave me like a lion in its den?" said Villaini, in a trembling voice, searching in a drawer before him with one hand, and keeping his eyes on his visitor all the while.

"Lion?" ejaculated Rodisco, "ass in lion's skin," producing a revolver as he spoke, "Did you think to be first, eh?" with a sneering laugh. "Take your hand out of that drawer, madman, or I shall shoot you."

"Shoot me—you dare not," returned the abased and trembling villain, obediently withdrawing a reluctant hand; "we are in England—don't forget that. There is a policeman round the corner," he added, with the last flicker of his expiring courage.

"Oh! indeed," sarcastically; "a policeman round the corner is there. I'm delighted to hear it. We may want him—not for the little business between you and me, for that," with grim significance, "can come off at any time, but for this affair at Lady Curzon's. I know all about it," he added, nodding his head, and looking at his victim with a malignant smile.

"You know all about it—then I don't?" returned Villaini, with a miserable attempt at bravado.

"Come now, none of your lies with me; be careful," said Bodisco, fiercely, cocking his revolver as he spoke. "You made away with her, you drew her fortune—the Princess Dormanoff's roubles. Heavens and earth! if the old woman could only rise out of her grave, and, see who has the spending of her money? But that's not the point—what have you done with her niece! Where is she?"

To this inquiry a long silence ensued. Lorenzo glaring across the table like a wild beast in his lair, and at bay.

"I give you just five minutes," looking over at the clock, "to prepare an answer—the answer. If at the end of that time you have not told the whole truth, you rascal, and nothing but the truth, I shall shoot you—not here, now, for that would make a fuss, and spoil the carpet, but within the next seven days. I swear it, and you know what our oaths are worth—full value. By rights we owe you twelve deaths, and if I could inflict them all on your miserable body, one after the other, I would," he concluded, between his set teeth, as he gazed at the miserable spectacle of abject terror at the other side of the table.

And the clock went ticking on—one minute was gone—two minutes—three minutes—nearly four, and Lorenzo spoke at last in a husky whisper.

"What is to be the price?" he asked, hoarsely.

"The price—what do you mean?" demanded Bodisco.

"The price of the secret about her. I'll not give it for nothing; no, not for nothing. Give me my life."

"You may have your life," replied the Russian, contemptuously, giving it to him as if it were as valueless as the paring of an apple—"your life if we find her as she was lost, unimpaired in health and looks, then you may have your miserable, worthless life; but not in Europe, my friend, it is too limited for your energies. To Australia or South America you go, and never come back. The instant you set foot on this continent the sword shall fall. There, those are our terms, and time is up, where is she?"

"She is mad," said Villaini, slowly—"insane."

"Then you have made her so, you villain," cried Bodisco, passionately; "tell the truth, or I shall wring it from your throat. Do you hear me, sir?" raising his voice for the first time.

And, accordingly, thus stimulated alike by hope and fear, Lorenzo began a halting tale of how Lady Curzon had come with charity to her sisters, of how he had met her in the avenue, of how she had insulted him, and he, in a moment of involuntary passion, had struck her.

(To be continued.)

GERTRUDE'S AMBITION.

—:o:—

Scene, an artist's studio, crammed with carved Swiss ornaments, old china, and countless elegant little articles of *bric-à brac*, and hung with folds of garnet velvet; time, mid-noon of a golden September day; *dramatis personæ*, Mr. Rolf Wynton, painting away at his last grand effort, a "Scene at the Court of Versailles in the time of Marie Antoinette," and Gertrude Lisle, who was sitting to him in the capacity of a French marquise, in yellow damask, black tresses, puffed and powdered, and a set of superb old discoloured pearls, that gleamed and glittered around her neck, like human tears.

Suddenly Rolf threw down his brush in a fit of artistic disgust.

"Pshaw!" he cried out. "I can't get the spirit of the thing, try as I may! I've a mind to cut the canvas in two!"

Miss Lisle looked timidly at him.

"Oh, Rolf!" said she.

Wynton shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"Gerty," said he, "you never comprehended the yearnings of an artist's soul."

"I'm very sorry, Rolf," said the girl, her da k

eyes filling with tears. "Of course, I know that you are a genius, and I am only——"

"There, there, dear, don't fret," said Wynton, almost instantaneously recovering his temper, as he stooped to pick up his mahl-stick, which had slipped to the floor. "You're a little darling—only sometimes I think what a grand thing it would be to have a *fiancée* who could sympathise with me—who knew something of my divine art!"

Gertrude was silent, but the colour came and went fitfully on her cheek as Rolf painted on.

"Rolf," she said, presently.

"Well, darling?"

"If you regret our engagement——"

"Who said that I regretted it?" impatiently broke in the artist.

"No one, Rolf," said Gertrude, speaking firmly, in spite of the rising lump in her throat. "Only I sometimes think that since you have known Madeleine Dufresne, with her brilliant talents and her enthusiasm for art, you feel that you were premature in asking poor, insignificant little me to be your wife."

Wynton looked laughingly up from his work.

"Don't be a goose, Gerty," said he. "What is it that the prayer book says about marriage? 'For better, for worse.' And I hold that it should be just the same with engaged people. Now be so good as to sit quiet for half-a-minute or so, until I get the rounded curve of the right arm. You're a little jewel of a girl, as I said before—and it's no fault of yours that you are not a born artist like Maddy Dufresne."

The picture progressed well that afternoon, and it was nearly two o'clock before Mr. Wynton released his wearied little sitter, who had leaned back in the velvet draped artist's chair with grave, abstracted eyes, and lips firmly compressed.

But instead of going down to the drawing-room, to practice sonatas and work upon her Kensington embroidery, Gertrude Lisle exchanged her gleaming yellow damask dress for a plain black cashmere, tied a little felt bonnet over her jet-black curls, and went out, losing herself in a labyrinthine tangle of streets, until she came to a tumble-down stone house, surrounded by antique grounds and stately evergreens.

"Is Mr. Reade at home?" she asked; and the smiling maid-servant showed her into a small octagonal room, with a dome of white glass overhead, where stood a snowy-haired old man, in a picturesque robe of black velvet, and a tasseled painting cap, before an easel, singing softly at his work.

"Well, little Gerty," said the venerable artist, "so you haven't quite forgotten the old man. Sit down, child, sit down, and tell me what errand has brought you hither."

Gertrude walked up in front of him, and stood there, with flushed cheeks, and eager, pleading eyes.

"Mr. Reade," said she, "I want to be an artist."

The old man looked at her with an amused smile.

"So," said he; "what has put that caprice into your pretty head?"

"It isn't a caprice," said Gerty, in a choked voice. "It is the dearest wish of my heart."

"Artists are born, not made, little one," said the old man, with a certain ring of sadness in his tone.

"But they never know their capacities until they try," pleaded Gertrude, wistfully. "The young lark never would would sing, Mr. Reade, if it did not test its first feeble notes."

"True," said the veteran, "true. And you want to take lessons?"

"Yes. But mind, Mr. Reade, it is to be a great, *great* secret."

And Gerty clasped her hands nervously as she spoke. She was thinking of Rolf Wynton.

"If I cannot be his equal," she told herself, "I will give him up to one who can, ay, even if my own heart should break in the effort."

"Well," said Mr. Reade, "well, we'll try. And don't be afraid, little one, your secret will be entirely safe with me."

A year—two years—went by, and still Gertrude Lisle, on one excuse and another, postponed her marriage with Rolf Wynton.

And the lover, at first inclined to remonstrate with his *fiancée* at this unanticipated delay, gradually reconciled himself to the idea, especially as he was very busy in completing a large historical picture which was to win uncounted laurels in the Paris galleries.

"And if it sells at my price," he said, rubbing his hands gleefully, "we can be married and go to housekeeping in style, eh, Gerty?"

And Gerty Lisle assented with a quiet smile, just as if, all the time, there was no lurking sting of jealously in regard to Madeleine Dufresne burning out her heart. For Madeleine was painting a picture too, and was in nowise shy of claiming Rolf Wynton's sympathy and advice on every possible and impossible point concerning its progress.

"She has so much talent," said Rolf.

"I suppose so," said Gertrude.

At last the opening of the National Academy of Design transpired, and there was an exquisite painting entitled "Love's Young Dream" upon its walls which set every tongue and pen a-quiver.

It was *the* picture of the season, the success of the gallery, and it had not been on exhibition a week before it was purchased by a Chicago millionaire for the very respectable sum of fifteen hundred dollars.

Of course every effort was made to discover whose pencil had achieved so brilliant a triumph—but the name printed opposite it on the catalogue, was simply "*Incognita.*"

"Madeleine Dufresne, of course," said Rolf Wynton, radiantly. "I knew she would create a sensation, some time or other. Genius *will* assert itself."

But when next he met Miss Dufresne and laughingly congratulated her, her only reply was a burst of tears.

"That hateful Hanging Committee," said she. "They rejected my picture! Said it was too crude and the colours were badly blended! I never will try again!"

Mr. Wynton's face fell.

"Then," said he, "you are not Incognita?"

"I!" echoed Madeleine. "What could possibly put such an idea into your head?"

Rolf went back to Gerty.

"It seems I am mistaken," said he. "Miss Dufresne did not paint that little gem that they call 'Love's Young Dream.'"

"I knew it," said Gertrude.

"You knew it?" echoed Rolf. "And how?"

"Because," said Gerty, demurely, "I painted it myself."

"Are *you* Incognita."

"I am Incognita!"

"Impossible!" shouted the young artist.

"But it is quite true!" smiled Gertrude. "Ask Mr. Reade if you still doubt my word."

Involuntarily Rolf Wynton bowed his head in the presence of Genius.

"Gerty," said he, "why have I never known before of this sacred flame, burning on the altar of your heart and hands?"

"Because I did not know it myself," said Gertrude, bursting into tears. "Because it came to me, like an inspiration, as I sat before the blank canvas in Mr. Reade's studio. And, oh, Rolf, I was so glad for your sake! I was so proud to think that I was worthy of you!"

"My darling," said Rolf, "it's quite the other way now. The question is whether I can be worthy of you!"

Madeleine Dufresne's hour of triumph was over. Her poor weak little attempts were altogether eclipsed in the success so unexpectedly achieved by "Love's Young Dream." And when, a few weeks later, the *magnum opus* of Rolf Wynton's ideas, his own great historical work, came back from Paris, "respectfully declined," his self-esteem received a blow from which it never recovered.

And he has to bite his lower lip, and endure in silence, when he hears people say, in crowded assemblies, "There goes Mrs. Rolf Wynton, the great artist, and her husband!"

O MISTRESS MINE!

—:o:—

CHAPTER XX.

FREE.

But the tremulous sound of Guinevere's tapping was scarcely so loud as that which the stirring, scratching creeper sprays made upon the window-panes.

Still Sir Angus never moved in his elbow writing-chair—never once looked up.

He did not appear to have heard even that timid outer knock.

So Guinevere, growing desperate, tapped again on the window, this time louder and longer; but even then he did not take his hand from before his eyes, or rouse himself ever so slightly from the mood of abstraction or dejection into which he seemed to have subsided.

Yet once more, therefore, did Guinevere venture with those frightened, palsied fingers of hers, and once again from the home farm near, borne towards her upon the fitful night breeze, there came the prolonged baying of the troubled, deep-voiced watch-dog.

But Sir Angus Adair never moved.

"I will enter unbidden if the latch is unfastened," thought Guinevere, despairingly. "I can wait no longer. My courage is going fast. I dare not wait—I shall go mad."

So she tried the handle of the long window cautiously and found that it was not locked.

Full of terror now, she pushed the glass door slowly and noiselessly back into the room, and then stepped in herself.

She closed the window behind her, and paused for a few seconds on the threshold in order to regain more nerve, more physical strength, before venturing any nearer to that quiet figure.

Not once had Sir Angus stirred.

He remained there as passive, as motionless, as when she had first looked into the room.

Scarcely conscious of what she did, she fastened the door-window carefully on the inside; and again as she turned away the dismal howling of the kennelled dog smote as it were on her fainting heart—such a melancholy, soul-sickening howl!

Softly and fearfully she moved over the thick carpet, until she stood within a yard of the elbow-chair he sat in.

"Ah, he is asleep—I understand now!" she said to herself, and then she crept close to his stirless side. The stillness of the great lofty room was as the stillness of a vault or of the grave.

"Angus," she murmured, hardly above her breath—"Angus!"

No answer—still that immovable attitude of deepest, deadliest despondency—the bowed head supported by the hand over his eyes, the elbow meanwhile resting on the incline of the desk, whereon lay the paper and the pens that apparently he had not touched.

Colder from head to foot, and more fearful grew Guinevere; the ghostly hush of the great room around her was truly awful, and struck sickening terror into her inmost soul.

In the hall beyond the library she heard the *frou-frou* of silken gowns, light laughter, and the opening and the shutting of a door.

Eight o'clock—the dinner hour—would sound in a few moments, and some of the guests had descended to the drawing-room. Minster Court was quite gay that night!

"Angus, I have come here to tell you that I cannot, I must not marry you, until—until I have confessed something that properly should have been confessed to you long, long ago," faltered Guinevere, laying her chilly, quivering hand upon the firm back of his chair in order to steady herself upon her fainting, quivering limbs. "Angus, look up, and hear me, please! It is I—Guinevere!"

She waited for him to speak, to reply in some sort; but, strangely enough, he spoke not. Could it be possible that he remained unconscious of her nearness to him!—that he could not hear her voice?

"Angus," she said brokenly again, "can you not hear me? I have something to tell you that you *must* hear to-night. I have been wicked—desperately wicked," she went on precipitately, each swift-passing second dreading interruption and discovery, "but I never meant to tell you—I never thought that I should tell you. Indeed, I meant my whole future life with you, Angus, to be a living lie—just a life-long lie, so long as we two should dwell together. It shall not be so, however, if you will only hear me now."

Had the dim and sombre library been tenanted by herself alone, the heavy silence which followed on her words could not have been more tense—more perfect.

The quiet figure seated there at the desk never stirred.

"Speak to me—speak to me! Say *something!*" she cried, in terrified, agonised accents. "Why are you so horribly quiet, Angus? You frighten me—it is I, your promised wife, Guinevere Wentworth!"

And then, in her nervous terror and dismay, she grasped and shook unwittingly the arm which supported his bent head, the hand which covered his eyes from her own.

Even at a touch so weak as hers, the hand and the arm fell away from his brow, a useless, lifeless limb—the head with its close-shut eyes, slipped slowly, helplessly downward to the leathered slope of the littered desk on the writing table.

No sound whatever came from between his lips; no ray of recognition or of understanding from beneath the waxen eyelids—for his features were colourless with the hue of death, cold, and still for ever!

Yes, Sir Angus Adair was dead.

The truth then, in an instant, in all its stunning force and reality crashed on to the mind of Guinevere.

A wild, ringing shriek, and a heavy thud, dull as lead, reverberated suddenly through the lofty corridors and chambers of Minster Court, startling the grave Elizabethan old mansion into unwonted excitement and activity.

In a panic of haste and fear nearly everyone in the house came flocking and crowding towards the library, impelled thither by some strange unerring instinct, guests and servants mingling indiscriminately—the dinner-bell clanging out at the same moment as the clocks struck eight.

Without ceremony they thrust open the library door, flooded in one upon the heels of another, and then fell back appalled, checked in their impetuous quest.

Stretched on the floor, unconscious, lay Guinevere, the lovely bride-elect, with Sir Angus Adair fallen forward from his chair to the writing-table—dead, stone dead, they could discern at a glance.

And the pale halo from the reading-lamp flickered weirdly in the draught over those two quiet figures, the dead and the living, there so near together—but severed everlastingly on their wedding-eve!

* * * * *

Summer once more in all her lush green loveliness was upon the fields and meadows, lanes and hedge-rows, round about the sleepy old town of Grayminster, when Guinevere Wentworth first began to recover slowly from the attack of brain fever which had laid her low on that never-to-be-forgotten evening when she had discovered Sir Angus Adair sitting dead in the library at Minster Court.

Then it was early May. Now it was late June.

She had been perfectly conscious—though strictly forbidden to excite herself by the asking of dangerous questions—for nearly a week, when one beautiful sunshiny afternoon Millicent Mainwaring called at Ivylands to see Guinevere, with Dr. Jack Roy's permission to talk a little with his patient—in due moderation, of course.

Dr. Jack had attended Guinevere from the first, and he and Millicent, of late, had met often at the gates of Mrs. Wentworth's pretty house on the Packington road.

Milly found Mrs. Wentworth herself wandering listlessly about the lawn in front of the house, arrayed airily and juvenilely in black and white grenadine, with bows and streamers of narrow black and white ribbon fluttering about her person in all directions.

Mrs. Wentworth had plunged into "half mourning" out of compliment to the memory of Sir Angus Adair. The bitter disappointment and vexation and humiliation of spirit which the awful tidings of his sudden end had caused the poor lady, would always be remembered by her to the end of her own existence. Indeed it was a wonder that she did not have brain-fever too!

"Guinevere is ever so much better to-day, I hear from Dr. Roy," was Millicent's greeting. "I am *so* glad, dear Mrs. Wentworth," she added heartily, "both for her sake and for your own. You have had a weary, anxious time."

"Heaven knows it," said Mrs. Wentworth pathetically. "Yes, Millicent, Dr. Roy has just left. He says there is a very great improvement to-day."

"May I go up to her?" asked Milly quickly, her fair cheeks rather more than pink.

"Oh, pray do," said the afflicted mother. "I have only this minute left her for a breath of fresh air. She will have many things to ask you, I fear, for her memory is growing stronger and clearer with every day. She begins to question even *me*, Milly; but I am positively obliged to rush from the room when she does. The all-too-sorrowful memories which her questions recall are really more than I can endure!"

And Mrs. Wentworth wiped away a tear or two with a pocket-handkerchief that was adorned all round with a narrow black line, likewise indicative of the overwhelming shock and loss she had sustained.

"Thank you. I will run up to her at once then," responded Millicent Mainwaring, brightly, thinking to herself the while what infinite and genuine satisfaction it would afford her, if she might only shake some of Mrs. Wentworth's nonsense out of her.

"Now, please, do not trouble to come with me! You know I am no stranger to the way, well enough."

So Millicent, with no further parleying with the mother in the garden, tripped into the house and lightly up the stairs to Guinevere's dainty bed-chamber.

"Come in," said a faint, languid voice, in answer to Millicent's knock. And Milly entered accordingly.

"And do you know me to-day, darling?" asked she gently.

"Know you? Oh, Milly!"

And then Milly leaned over the invalid and kissed her lingeringly and lovingly—kissed Guinevere's cheeks, brows, and eyes, and the poor pretty head all so closely shorn of its glorious Titian locks.

The windows of the room were open to the warm sweet air of the day, laden as it was with a thousand breezy scents from the flowers in the garden below.

But the door of communication between the bedroom and the dressing-room was kept locked, with the key in Mrs. Wentworth's pocket, for within that latter chamber were still to be found the numerous costly articles of wedding finery—the wedding-gown itself and the nearly-packed imperials, once destined for the wedding-journey, the orange flowers and the exquisite gossamer veil—everything indeed just as it had been left in readiness for the morrow on Guinevere's bridal-eve; at least, that tragic evening which everyone believed was, and had spoken of as, Guinevere's bridal-eve; and she must not be allowed to see again just yet all those things of bitter mockery in that other room, so Dr. Jack Roy had affirmed—the mere sight of them would distress his patient too acutely, he felt sure; possibly might affect her returning strength in a dangerous way altogether.

So the door of communication was kept locked and guarded as carefully as ever was that door of the ghastly chamber wherein the headless wives of terrible Blue-beard remained hidden from the light of day!

"Sit down, Milly, dearest," said Guinevere, in weak beseeching accents—"I have so much to say—so much! Here, dear Milly, by the bedside, close to the pillows where I can see and hear you well. Oh, what an age it seems since we met!"

"If it comes to that, we have met about every other day lately," said Milly cheerfully.

"Ah, yes," sighed Guinevere—"but then I did not know!"

So Millicent sat restfully down, and gathered into her own hand the delicate blue-veined little one, which was straying and fingering over the coverlet in such idle, aimless fashion.

How wan and thin, Milly noticed, was the perfect, but now colourless face, with its lovely eyes of deepest violet-blue, so heavily fringed with their tawny-brown lashes.

How pale were the once red, beautiful lips, which in the past had uttered so much that was false and heartless to the one—which had spoken so little that was kind and gentle to the other—that other who was now—— Ah! how differently, how widely different, would she comport herself towards them both, could she only be given that self-same past to live over once again. Oh, vain regret!

"I have been ill for a very long time, Milly; have not I?" she asked by-and-by, fixing her large, purple-rimmed eyes dreamily on the blue-misted space out-of-doors, visible over the woods through the nearest open window. "Somehow, it seems years and years—but of course that is folly."

"Exactly six weeks on the day after to-morrow, if you will know, Guinevere," was Milly's soft, tender reply, yet given half playfully, as she still fondled Guinevere's wan little hand.

"Only six weeks? And I don't in the least remember anyone cutting off my hair," she said, wonderingly.

"I should think not," Milly said, gravely. "You were far too ill, Guinevere."

"I suppose then, I was delirious, was I not, Milly?" she said idly, "or they never would have robbed me of my beautiful hair."

"Of course you were so, my dear child," replied Millicent, with a quaint assumption of nursehood and motherliness—"people always are with brain fever, you know. But there, we are not going to talk any more about such dismal and depressing subjects as your illness. We will speak of things more genial and exhilarating. For instance——"

"No, no, no—I want to speak of it," protested the invalid feebly, yet with a spark of the old wilfulness and defiance quickening the faint petulant tones. "I must and I will speak of it! You will make me mad and delirious again, Milly, if you so unkindly refuse to listen to and answer the questions that have been struggling, as it were, for utterance in my mind for days past now. My mother pretends to cry or faint, or something exasperating and ridiculous whenever I try to question her about things, and leaves the room with her handkerchief to her mouth—all sheer nonsense of course—and so you must answer and enlighten me, Milly, now that both reason and memory have returned."

"Yes, yes—I will of course," answered Millicent hurriedly, not to say fearfully, for Guinevere was growing restless and excited, and excitement was the very worst thing in the world for her, and would be likely to undo all the good that Dr. Jack Roy had done for her so far—"I'll tell you—I'll promise you anything, if you will only keep quiet, Guinevere."

Millicent Mainwaring smoothed back the short, soft rebellious curls from the pale forehead with her cool, ringless hand, and under that soothing caressing touch Guinevere closed her eyes and was still.

"Milly," she said slowly, presently, "does my mother know—do all of you know—why it was that I went over to Minster Court on that—on that night?—do you all understand now the motive I had for starting on so mad an errand?"

"Yes, Guinevere," was Millicent's gentle response, "we know all now—everything."

"But how?" she inquired, perplexed. "How can that be?"

"All through your illness, Guinevere, you were crying out unceasingly the story of—of that errand of yours to Minster Court," Millicent explained to her gravely—"everything that happened in the shrubberies with—with you know

who, and all that occurred after it, later on. Night and day, day and night, only a little while ago, my dearest, your poor tired brain seemed haunted solely with the miserable recollection of it all."

"Ah, and no wonder," sighed Guinevere. "Milly," very earnestly, "I shall never, never forget that awful night and its experiences so long as I live. Should I live to be a hundred years old and upward, the memory of it will remain clear in every detail. I marvel now that I did not fall dead myself, there and then by his side in the library—over there, you know! Oh, Milly"—shuddering violently—"it was fearful—fearful, dear."

"Now hush," interposed Millicent warningly; but Guinevere would not heed.

"First of all, there was that totally unexpected meeting with—with Don in the thicket here by the meadow, a cruel interview altogether, which left me unnerved, unstrung, wavering, and unutterably wretched," she half sobbed, "and then—and then, when my mind was made up, my determination taken, I—I——"

"I declare if you work yourself into a fever in this way, Guinevere," interposed Millicent firmly, "you shall talk no longer, for I will leave you instantly. I mean it."

"Then I will try not to," she said obediently, with more composure, though the beautiful eyes were dim and heavy with their tears. Then, in a laboured, awe-stricken whisper,—

"Milly, tell me—what was it that killed him? Was it—was it—could it be that—that——"

"It was disease of the heart," Millicent Mainwaring answered gravely, a great pity shining in her eyes, a note of deep compassion in her voice. "That was the verdict at the dreadful inquest that of course it was necessary to hold; and the doctors that were summoned by his people at the time were each of the same opinion on the question. His mother, you know, darling, the late Lady Adair, died of a diseased heart—and it was a fatal inheritance from her, they said."

CHAPTER XXI.

HOPE!

"Poor Angus!" Guinevere murmured, tearfully. "Do not you recollect, Milly, my telling you about something which happened in the drawing-room at Minster Court, when mother and I were spending the day there once—and how it frightened us, you know?"

Millicent nodded.

"Well, after that, I always somehow seemed to fear that something dreadful, sooner or later, would—would happen suddenly to him—which indeed has proved to be the case!"

"Yes—poor Sir Angus!" sighed Millicent compassionately, with eyes full of thought.

"And yet, do you know," Guinevere went on musingly, "a clever physician in London had already told him that there was nothing whatever to be anxious about, nothing to fear, unless it were under the stress of severe mental trouble or undue fatigue. And there could have been nothing at all on—on that evening, could there, Milly, to tire, or to hurt, or to worry him in any way, you know?"

"No," answered Milly, thoughtfully still, "that was precisely what the doctors themselves said afterwards. And yet there must have been *something*, some *cause*, known only perhaps to Sir Angus Adair himself, which hastened his grievous end. However, no one will ever know now, I suppose, what it was that killed him before his time."

No—only a dead bouquet of once-lovely blossoms, fast crumbling into decay and nothingness amidst the underwood of the wild thicket near the meadow at Ivylands, could proclaim the sorrowful true legend of the death of Sir Angus Adair!

If flowers—dead, gray, scentless flowers—could find a tongue, then might these speak and tell the story!

But they would keep their secret well!

"It is all too sad to reflect," Guinevere said, speaking dreamily and quietly enough *now* "that he was actually looking for *me* in the garden here, barely an hour before he died—so bitterly sad to remember that he was unable to find me, and so went home—to die!"

A faint colour suffused her wan cheek as the dim, yet vivid recollection of *why* he had been unable to find her—as she completely believed—flashed back on her enfeebled memory!

"And then, again, to think that I should steal over in the twilight to Minster Court, with the firm intention of acting as fairly and as honestly towards him as it lay in my power to do at the eleventh hour, only to find, to behold with my own eyes that he—he was beyond all touch of justice—all restitution—all——"

Here the words choked her, and she began to weep; but in no wise feverishly or excitedly, only quietly and very sorrowfully—tears that might ease and refresh her, and certainly do her no harm.

"Now, do not cry, darling," whispered Millicent, tenderly; "all that is past now—past and done with—and nothing can alter it. It belongs to the irrevocable. So, Guinevere, do not cry any more—you will be happier and braver in the future to come."

"I pray so, with all my heart and soul," sighed Guinevere, wistfully. "Oh, Milly, what a blunder it has all been throughout—what a bad and wicked blunder from beginning to end!"

"I always said so, dear, if you remember," returned Millicent, tranquilly. "But whenever I *did* venture to tell you that it was all wrong, you used to get angry with me, and advise me not to reproach you—and so I didn't, you know. I simply let you go your own way."

"Ah, yes, that was in the old days—the faraway days, as they seem now," said the invalid, smiling faintly. "Well, Milly, I never mean to be wilful and wrong-headed any more. I mean, indeed, to begin a new life altogether—a life wherein selfishness, and vanity, and pride, and worldliness shall never find a part. With the help of Heaven I will strive to be a different woman from that I have shown myself hitherto—yes, I will, Milly; that is, of course," she added softly and reverently, "should I be spared and raised up from this bed of sickness to lead the better and the nobler life."

"Come, hush, hush, hush!" whispered Millicent again, rebukingly this time, yet speaking as cheerily as she could all the same. "You must not talk to me of being 'spared' now that the worst is over!"

"And did they bring me home here from Minster Court on—on that very same night?" questioned Guinevere, a little tiredly now, her restless mind straying back to those few tragic hours of the dead past which she never would and never could forget.

"When they discovered you, dear," was Millicent Mainwaring's patient explanation, "they sent immediately for Mrs. Wentworth and your uncle; but I believe it was some time before they arrived on the scene, for your mother was as one distraught at the news. When they did get to you, however, they bore you away in the carriage home here to Ivylands, and you have been lying in this room—in this bed, Guinevere—ever since."

"And, Milly, tell me," she asked, "was there much of a scandal over—over the matter? Did the Grayminster people talk very much about—about me and him, after it was all known in the place?"

"Well, just a little, naturally," Millicent told her, with a cheery and shocking disregard for the actual truth—"nothing to worry yourself about, Guinevere."

"I am glad of that," she said, dreamily; "and he—Sir Angus—did they bury him in the great mausoleum in the park yonder, along with all the other Adairs that lie entombed there"—in a timid curious undertone—"did they, Milly?"

"Yes, dear," Millicent answered hurriedly, anxious to change the subject, "and everyone now is gone away from Minster Court. The old place is shut up at present, but the new heir and master is expected daily, I believe—a widower, we hear, with a pack of daughters. And now, Guinevere darling, I must say good-by."

She leaned over the pillows to press her lingering, parting kiss on the invalid's pale, sad face.

Guinevere, throwing her arms around Millicent's neck, had yet one more question to put at the last.

"Milly," she half sobbed, "where—where is London now? At home with you—or abroad?"

"At home with us, dearest," answered Milly, very softly.

Guinevere trembled, clinging to Millicent still.

"Really at home with you!" she whispered presently. "And—and, Milly, when will he go away again?"

And Milly made answer, gently,—

"Never again, Guinevere—never again!"

CHAPTER XXII.

"JOURNEYS END IN LOVERS MEETING."

A vast clear arch of deep purple, all strewn with innumerable stars; a sweet and holy calm in the flower-scented air; a nightingale's full rich liquid note coming from the larches by the meadow at Ivylands.

Beneath the palpitating stars, in the fair serenity of that lovely evening, London Mainwaring and Guinevere Wentworth were once more lingering together along the old familiar ways.

Perfectly well and strong again was she by this time, and the cup of her earthly happiness was full to the brim and over-flowing.

For into her ear was London pouring the oft-repeated story of his unalterable devotion—the story which he had first told to her a year or more ago, and which had then been met by Guinevere with treachery, falsehood, and scorn.

"You are all my own *now*; and for ever and ever will I love thee, Guinevere," he was telling her, with passionate tenderness—"and no power on earth shall ever part us again from each other."

She clung to him beseechingly, murmuring in reply: "And, Don, you pardon everything?"

"*All* is forgiven, dearest, you know—forgiven and forgotten. You love me now—I am satisfied—more than content, my own Guinevere!"

"But then I have *always* loved you, Don," she whispered shyly, pressing her cheek to his shoulder.

"I was 'only a boy' once," he reminded her, dropping a kiss upon the beautiful soft head—"'Only a boy,' do you remember, Guinevere?"

"So I think you still," she answered. "Yet I love you, all the same."

"Really, sweetheart?"

She only nestled the more closely to his side. She would not answer him now.

So he drew her forthwith into his strong embrace, and kissed her on the lips.

"Yes, in truth, my own at last!" said he.

* * * * *

One morning, greatly to the surprise of Mr. Mainwaring, senior, Dr. Jack Roy marched boldly into the private office, where the old gentleman sat busily writing, alone, as good fortune would have it for the intrepid Dr. Jack.

The old gentleman was more astonished than ever when Dr. Jack Roy, with characteristic coolness and simplicity, explained the reason of his somewhat early call.

Dr. Jack, indeed, was altogether so straightforward, so honest, so simple, and yet so perfectly business-like in the matter, that old Mr. Mainwaring was charmed in spite of himself, albeit his breath was rather taken away.

"I am come to ask you for your daughter—your younger daughter, sir—Miss Millicent," announced Dr. Jack.

"Why, bless my soul alive!" gasped the old gentleman, "who would have thought it?"

And he pushed up his spectacles until they sat rakishly on the top of his bald and shining forehead.

"Have you spoken to Milly herself yet?" added Mr. Mainwaring, rather helplessly.

"No, sir," replied Dr. Jack modestly. "I thought it the proper course to gain your permission first."

"Umph!" commented the lawyer. And then he pulled his glasses back into their rightful place, and gazed at the young man through them

"ANGUS," GUINEVERE MURMURED, HARDLY ABOVE HER BREATH—"ANGUS!"

very steadily as he sat there before him in the full light of the office window.

"It is, of course, superfluous to inquire of you whether you are in a position to marry," Mr. Mainwaring said bluntly. "Were it otherwise, I should not see you here. Still there is no harm in my asking, sir, whether you have any grounds for supposing that my little Milly cares for you well enough to marry you?"

Dr. Jack flushed ever so slightly then; but he answered at once truthfully, and without conceit:

"I think, Mr. Mainwaring, that I have every reason to believe that your daughter, Miss Millicent, regards me favourably."

Then Lawyer Mainwaring stood up, and the young doctor followed his example.

"Well, sir," spoke Milly's father, "you have taken me by surprise. I confess, I shall be sorry to lose her—very sorry; but girls, of course, must marry some day or other, if the chance to do so comes in their way. I knew your father, and liked him—I know *you*, Dr. Jack, and like you, too. So take her, and be kind to her, if she'll have you, and my blessing with her into the bargain! Dear me, dear me! Who'd have suspected it?"

Whereupon Dr. Jack grasped the old gentleman's hand very heartily, and those dreamy blue eyes of his quite woke up.

"I should like to thank you, sir," said he gratefully, "but I feel that I have no words——"

Mr. Mainwaring, as was well-known, was by no means a demonstrative man himself; neither did he care for that sort of thing in others.

"You have already said enough, Dr. Jack," interrupted the old gentleman kindly. Then he smiled, adding with a twinkling eye,—

"If you are really anxious to show me any gratitude, do so by leaving me now. To tell you the truth, I am very busy this morning—unusually busy," said Mr. Mainwaring, "so dine with us this evening, my dear boy, and wish me good-day now."

Dr. Jack Roy needed no second bidding to make himself scarce; for, as it was, he had barely ten minutes left in which to see and speak with Millicent before setting out on his round of calls in the neighbourhood.

Indeed, Milly was waiting for him in the office passage.

Mr. Mainwaring himself meanwhile returned to his beloved desk and settled down again to his work.

"Sly little cat!" he muttered indulgently, as he scratched away with his quill as diligently and conscientiously as if he were one of his own junior clerks at forty shillings a week. "Sly little cat! But there, in my opinion, women are all alike—sly, all sly—not one of 'em to be trusted out of your sight!"

* * * * *

Many years have come and gone since Guinevere Wentworth's actual wedding-day.

Guinevere Mainwaring she is called now, and her whole life is a life of unclouded happiness.

And the shrewd and kindly old lawyer, Mr. Mainwaring, senior, has long since passed away to his well-earned rest; but he lived to see and fondle upon his knee his first young grandchild, Loudon's son and heir, and to reverse entirely the harsh opinion he had once formed of that little child's beautiful mother.

Loudon and Guinevere live at the great square red-brick old house in the Grayminster High-street. The place had always been Don's home, and neither of them would care to forsake it.

It is haunted by memories of a long ago—dear memories that will only strengthen and grow yet dearer as the fading years leave them still farther behind in the past.

Ursula and Millicent are happy likewise, each as the wife and helpmate of a good and an earnest working man.

Miss Dinwiddie, her years notwithstanding, is as blithe and energetic as ever, still dwelling at the Rectory House of St. Eve's with Ursula and the Reverend Mark Sparrow.

Ursula would not have her go elsewhere for the world, so invaluable does she consider the cheery little old spinster, alike as a friend and fellow-toiler in the parish.

At Ivylands, vain, frivolous, and affected, even with old age creeping stealthily on her, Mrs. Wentworth lives on there alone.

She will never cease to mourn and regret that her daughter Guinevere is not Lady Adair, and the *châtelaine* of Minster Court.

Each time that she chances to be a guest beneath the roof of the fine old Elizabethan mansion, the thought of all that might have been and is not comes over her very cruelly, and she groans mentally in the horrible vexation and bitterness of spirit which the reflection—the contemplation of the past—invariably causes her.

The peace of Guinevere's married life would scarcely, perhaps, be so perfect, so unalloyed, could she at any time only guess the sorrowful enigma of Sir Angus Adair's death.

Ah! could she only divine all that he had witnessed and suffered on that memorable May evening so long ago now, sheltered, hidden as he was, in the depths of the wild thicket by the meadow in the garden at Ivylands!

Could she only guess that even as he died, almost pen in hand, he had been about to set her free of his own true will, then and there, feeling in his honour, which was, perhaps, after all stronger than his love, how wholly impossible it would be to make her his wife and the mistress of his home, after having witnessed that secret, passionate interview in the twilight garden with a rival of whose existence he had never once dreamed!

But Guinevere Mainwaring knows nothing of all this.

No mortal knows, in fact, nor will he ever know on this side of eternity.

Verily for Guinevere herself, "ignorance is bliss" indeed!

Sir Angus Adair carried the secret to his grave.

There, in his broken heart, it lies buried with him.

[THE END.]

"POOR GIRL! HOW ILL SHE LOOKS. I THOUGHT SHE WAS GOING TO FAINT!" MURMURED SEVERAL VOICES.

HIS MOTHERLESS LITTLE GIRL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Macgregor House,
"Lachlan, Feb. 6th, 1884.

"MY DEAR MARSDEN,—

"The call has come at last, we are ordered off to the Soudan, where I expect there will be some sharp fighting. I should have liked to run over to see you before going but that is impossible, as there is so much to do, so little time in which to do it. But I am firmly convinced that our long separation has not in any way decreased your affection for me, and, as proof of my faith, I am going to draw largely upon your friendship.

"You are aware that I have an only daughter, called Ailsa, after her dead mother, and it is on her behalf I ask your good offices. She is a dear and dutiful child, but, unfortunately, there is just one point on which we differ. I am afraid I must be rather lengthy on this subject, but that you will pardon. Two years ago, Ailsa, then eighteen, became engaged to a young fellow named Walter Eltringham, a clerk in Mostyn's shipping office. He was penniless, but of extremely good birth, of excellent abilities, and plenty of 'go' in him, so that I raised no objection to the betrothal, especially as the young people were content to wait until fortune smiled on them.

"So far, all was well; but three months later a series of petty thefts were committed at Mostyn's, and suspicion fell upon Eltringham. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment; he all the while, protesting his innocence, and Ailsa so firmly believed in it that she refused to consider herself free.

"Now that I am called away I am sorely troubled about her; in three months Walter Eltringham will be a free man, and I fear that if he seeks her she will listen to his entreaties and give her life up to him and certain misery. My sister is as much the wretched lad's partisan as even Ailsa could desire, and would rather compass than prevent their meetings. I have no other relation, and no friend save yourself to whom I can apply for help; frankly, my dear Marsden, I want you to give the child shelter until my return—if ever I do return.

"The healthy tone of your household, the bright society of girls of her own age, may do much to kill her unfortunate attachment. I will lodge a sufficient sum with Barley and Barley for her requirements; my will is duly attested, and, should I fall, my little girl, though not rich, will be placed beyond all fear of want. But I cannot tear myself away until I have also provided for her *present* safety; so I shall look anxiously for your reply. Thanking you, in anticipation, for your goodness, with sincere regards to Mrs. and the Misses Marsden,

"I am, dear Marsden,
"Loyally yours,
"ANGUS MACGREGOR."

Mr. Marsden looked up from the perusal of this letter to meet his wife's eyes.

"Well?" he said, "what am I to answer? I should like to do Macgregor a good turn, he saved my life once; but it must be as you wish."

"No, no, papa," with a humorous twinkle in her eyes, "you forget the 'tyrants'; if they object to receive Miss Macgregor the matter is settled conclusively."

"That is decidedly nasty, mamma," broke in the elder girl—there were two of them—"we never try to carry the day save when we feel sure it is for *your* good;" and, laughing, she showed all her white teeth to advantage.

Then Jessie spoke.

"Oh, by all means, let her come; *she has no mother.*"

"And we should have had no father but *for her* father added Ethel."

"They have decided for us, papa," said Mrs. Marsden, with mock rueful glance; then, more seriously, "we will abide by 'the tyrants'' decision. Poor girl, life has begun very hardly for her. Make your letter nice, and, if you think she would like it I will enclose a note for her."

The sisters exchanged significant looks; they were well aware of the hidden tenderness of "mother's," heart and felt from the first that the young Scotch visitor would be petted and made much of, not only because of her lonely position, but that her unhappy attachment, her unswerving faith in her lover, had touched the romantic side of Mrs. Marsden's nature. And whilst their parents were absent, each engaged with their correspondence, they freely discussed the pros and cons of the case. They were all well made girls, not pretty, yet good to look upon; splendid specimens of the English maiden as she should be; healthy, happy, free, without fastness or flippancy, loving dearly the homely pursuits of country life, yet accepting the pleasures of town with an enjoyment that was refreshing to witness. They were generally voted "nice" and "jolly," and both terms were equally applicable.

"I hope Ailsa Macgregor will not be too lackadaisical," remarked Jessie after a little pause, "I never know how to converse with sentimental girls."

"I suppose a girl may be 'in love,'" answered Ethel "and yet not make herself absurd. I rather like our new friend for her constancy to her lover; even though he does not seem to deserve it."

"If he should, after all, be innocent," suggested Jessie, "how terribly hard for him and Ailsa; somehow, I don't think a really nice girl could be wholly deceived in her lover; or could be faithful to one who had proved himself a *common thief*."

"Ah! Jessie, that is what neither you nor can realise *yet*, but I do know that many of the worst men *get* the best wives and *vice-versa*.

"ANGUS," GUINEVERE MURMURED, HARDLY ABOVE HER BREATH—"ANGUS!"

very steadily as he sat there before him in the full light of the office window.

"It is, of course, superfluous to inquire of you whether you are in a position to marry," Mr. Mainwaring said bluntly. "Were it otherwise, I should not see you here. Still there is no harm in my asking, sir, whether you have any grounds for supposing that my little Milly cares for you well enough to marry you?"

Dr. Jack flushed ever so slightly then; but he answered at once truthfully, and without conceit:

"I think, Mr. Mainwaring, that I have every reason to believe that your daughter, Miss Millicent, regards me favourably."

Then Lawyer Mainwaring stood up, and the young doctor followed his example.

"Well, sir," spoke Milly's father, "you have taken me by surprise. I confess, I shall be sorry to lose her—very sorry; but girls, of course, must marry some day or other, if the chance to do so comes in their way. I knew your father, and liked him—I know *you*, Dr. Jack, and like you, too. So take her, and be kind to her, if she'll have you, and my blessing with her into the bargain! Dear me, dear me! Who'd have suspected it?"

Whereupon Dr. Jack grasped the old gentleman's hand very heartily, and those dreamy blue eyes of his quite woke up.

"I should like to thank you, sir," said he gratefully, "but I feel that I have no words——"

Mr. Mainwaring, as was well-known, was by no means a demonstrative man himself; neither did he care for that sort of thing in others.

"You have already said enough, Dr. Jack," interrupted the old gentleman kindly. Then he smiled, adding with a twinkling eye,—

"If you are really anxious to show me any gratitude, do so by leaving me now. To tell you the truth, I am very busy this morning—unusually busy," said Mr. Mainwaring, "so dine with us this evening, my dear boy, and wish me good-day now."

Dr. Jack Roy needed no second bidding to make himself scarce; for, as it was, he had barely ten minutes left in which to see and speak with Millicent before setting out on his round of calls in the neighbourhood.

Indeed, Milly was waiting for him in the office passage.

Mr. Mainwaring himself meanwhile returned to his beloved desk and settled down again to his work.

"Sly little cat!" he muttered indulgently, as he scratched away with his quill as diligently and conscientiously as if he were one of his own junior clerks at forty shillings a week. "Sly little cat! But there, in my opinion, women are all alike—sly, all sly—not one of 'em to be trusted out of your sight!"

* * * * *

Many years have come and gone since Guinevere Wentworth's actual wedding-day.

Guinevere Mainwaring she is called now, and her whole life is a life of unclouded happiness.

And the shrewd and kindly old lawyer, Mr. Mainwaring, senior, has long since passed away to his well-earned rest; but he lived to see and fondle upon his knee his first young grandchild, Loudon's son and heir, and to reverse entirely the harsh opinion he had once formed of that little child's beautiful mother.

Loudon and Guinevere live at the great square red-brick old house in the Grayminster High-street. The place had always been Don's home, and neither of them would care to forsake it.

It is haunted by memories of a long ago—dear memories that will only strengthen and grow yet dearer as the fading years leave them still farther behind in the past.

Ursula and Millicent are happy likewise, each as the wife and helpmate of a good and an earnest working man.

Miss Dinwiddie, her years notwithstanding, is as blithe and energetic as ever, still dwelling at the Rectory House of St. Eve's with Ursula and the Reverend Mark Sparrow.

Ursula would not have her go elsewhere for the world, so invaluable does she consider the cheery little old spinster, alike as a friend and fellow-toiler in the parish.

At Ivylands, vain, frivolous, and affected, even with old age creeping stealthily on her, Mrs. Wentworth lives on there alone.

She will never cease to mourn and regret that her daughter Guinevere is not Lady Adair, and the *châtelaine* of Minster Court.

Each time that she chances to be a guest beneath the roof of the fine old Elizabethan mansion, the thought of all that might have been and is not comes over her very cruelly, and she groans mentally in the horrible vexation and bitterness of spirit which the reflection—the contemplation of the past—invariably causes her.

The peace of Guinevere's married life would scarcely, perhaps, be so perfect, so unalloyed, could she at any time only guess the sorrowful enigma of Sir Angus Adair's death.

Ah! could she only divine all that he had witnessed and suffered on that memorable May evening so long ago now, sheltered, hidden as he was, in the depths of the wild thicket by the meadow in the garden at Ivylands!

Could she only guess that even as he died, almost pen in hand, he had been about to set her free of his own true will, then and there, feeling in his honour, which was, perhaps, after all stronger than his love, how wholly impossible it would be to make her his wife and the mistress of his home, after having witnessed that secret, passionate interview in the twilight garden with a rival of whose existence he had never once dreamed!

But Guinevere Mainwaring knows nothing of all this.

No mortal knows, in fact, nor will he ever know on this side of eternity.

Verily for Guinevere herself, "ignorance is bliss" indeed!

Sir Angus Adair carried the secret to his grave.

There, in his broken heart, it lies buried with him.

[THE END.]

"POOR GIRL! HOW ILL SHE LOOKS. I THOUGHT SHE WAS GOING TO FAINT!" MURMURED SEVERAL VOICES.

HIS MOTHERLESS LITTLE GIRL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Macgregor House,
"Lachlan, Feb. 6th, 1884.

"MY DEAR MARSDEN,—

"The call has come at last, we are ordered off to the Soudan, where I expect there will be some sharp fighting. I should have liked to run over to see you before going but that is impossible, as there is so much to do, so little time in which to do it. But I am firmly convinced that our long separation has not in any way decreased your affection for me, and, as proof of my faith, I am going to draw largely upon your friendship.

"You are aware that I have an only daughter, called Ailsa, after her dead mother, and it is on her behalf I ask your good offices. She is a dear and dutiful child, but, unfortunately, there is just one point on which we differ. I am afraid I must be rather lengthy on this subject, but that you will pardon. Two years ago, Ailsa, then eighteen, became engaged to a young fellow named Walter Eltringham, a clerk in Mostyn's shipping office. He was penniless, but of extremely good birth, of excellent abilities, and plenty of 'go' in him, so that I raised no objection to the betrothal, especially as the young people were content to wait until fortune smiled on them.

"So far, all was well; but three months later a series of petty thefts were committed at Mostyn's, and suspicion fell upon Eltringham. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment; he all the while, protesting his innocence, and Ailsa so firmly believed in it that she refused to consider herself free.

"Now that I am called away I am sorely troubled about her; in three months Walter Eltringham will be a free man, and I fear that if he seeks her she will listen to his entreaties and give her life up to him and certain misery. My sister is as much the wretched lad's partisan as even Ailsa could desire, and would rather compass than prevent their meetings. I have no other relation, and no friend save yourself to whom I can apply for help; frankly, my dear Marsden, I want you to give the child shelter until my return—if ever I do return.

"The healthy tone of your household, the bright society of girls of her own age, may do much to kill her unfortunate attachment. I will lodge a sufficient sum with Barley and Barley for her requirements; my will is duly attested, and, should I fall, my little girl, though not rich, will be placed beyond all fear of want. But I cannot tear myself away until I have also provided for her *present* safety; so I shall look anxiously for your reply. Thanking you, in anticipation, for your goodness, with sincere regards to Mrs. and the Misses Marsden,

"I am, dear Marsden,
"Loyally yours,
"ANGUS MACGREGOR."

Mr. Marsden looked up from the perusal of this letter to meet his wife's eyes.

"Well?" he said, "what am I to answer? I should like to do Macgregor a good turn, he saved my life once; but it must be as you wish."

"No, no, papa," with a humorous twinkle in her eyes, "you forget the 'tyrants'; if they object to receive Miss Macgregor the matter is settled conclusively."

"That is decidedly nasty, mamma," broke in the elder girl—there were two of them—"we never try to carry the day save when we feel sure it is for *your* good;" and, laughing, she showed all her white teeth to advantage.

Then Jessie spoke.

"Oh, by all means, let her come; *she has no mother.*"

"And we should have had no father but *for her* father added Ethel."

"They have decided for us, papa," said Mrs. Marsden, with mock rueful glance; then, more seriously, "we will abide by 'the tyrants'' decision. Poor girl, life has begun very hardly for her. Make your letter nice, and, if you think she would like it I will enclose a note for her."

The sisters exchanged significant looks; they were well aware of the hidden tenderness of "mother's," heart and felt from the first that the young Scotch visitor would be petted and made much of, not only because of her lonely position, but that her unhappy attachment, her unswerving faith in her lover, had touched the romantic side of Mrs. Marsden's nature. And whilst their parents were absent, each engaged with their correspondence, they freely discussed the pros and cons of the case. They were all well made girls, not pretty, yet good to look upon; splendid specimens of the English maiden as she should be; healthy, happy, free, without fastness or flippancy, loving dearly the homely pursuits of country life, yet accepting the pleasures of town with an enjoyment that was refreshing to witness. They were generally voted "nice" and "jolly," and both terms were equally applicable.

"I hope Ailsa Macgregor will not be too lackadaisical," remarked Jessie after a little pause, "I never know how to converse with sentimental girls."

"I suppose a girl may be 'in love,'" answered Ethel "and yet not make herself absurd. I rather like our new friend for her constancy to her lover; even though he does not seem to deserve it."

"If he should, after all, be innocent," suggested Jessie, "how terribly hard for him and Ailsa; somehow, I don't think a really nice girl could be wholly deceived in her lover; or could be faithful to one who had proved himself a *common thief.*"

"Ah! Jessie, that is what neither you nor can realise *yet*, but I do know that many of the worst men *get* the best wives and *vice-versa.*"

hope that Ailsa, I like her name, will not be too hopelessly Scotchy, so that we are at a loss to understand her; if she is, how extremely unpleasant she will find it when we go to town; and should she have red hair——"

"Oh, she won't," said Jessie with conviction; "papa has always said that Major Macgregor was a very handsome man, rather dark than otherwise, and daughters usually resemble their fathers most. I wonder which room mamma will give her?"

"I was going to suggest you should share mine, as it is so very much larger than yours; in that case, Ailsa could take yours, and the middle chamber could be converted into a dressing-room for us all."

"Capital! My dear you have a genius for arranging things; accept my congratulations," and with a deep obeisance she laughingly left her sister.

Duly the letters were despatched, and the reply came in form of a telegram,—

"So many thanks; have no time to write; ordered to head quarters to-day. Ailsa arrives at Lyndhurst 7.30 p.m. to-morrow."

All was bustle and merry labour for a short time, "the tyrants" helping with a right good will to prepare the guest's apartments, and when all was finished they pronounced them perfect; as indeed they were.

The bedroom was all of spotless white, as befitted a young maiden; on the pearl-white walls were a few choice pictures; little dainty articles, dear to woman's heart, chosen with care and taste; whilst the dressing-room opening from it, and common to the three girls was of blue and silver.

On the morrow the sisters gathered great quantities of snowdrops with which still further to beautify the chambers; there were some beautiful camelias in the greenhouses, but these Ethel declined to touch, saying "they were so stiff and frumpish," at which piece of heresy the gardener stood aghast, so that she added gaily,—

"Why, I have seen equally beautiful flowers cut out of turnips and beet, when I have been in town; they fasten them to a stick, Jarvis, and sell them for a half-penny each; at a little distance you cannot tell the real from the counterfeit. Yes, you may give me as many fronds as you please; I am partial to ferns, as you ought to know."

"You're the worst enemy they've got, begging your pardon, miss; but for me the master would never have one worth showing."

"Plain proof how we appreciate your productions," smiled Jessie, as she followed Ethel out of the house, and the old man looked after them thinking how bonny and bright they were, how happy they made the old homestead which Marsden after Marsden had held so far back as the chronicles of Lyndhurst dated.

Now the evening had closed in; the fires were burning cheerily, and the windows were all ablaze with lights, for the night was both cold and dark, so that Mrs. Marsden said,—

"Ailsa's first view of the place must not be gloomy. I always believe in first impressions you know, Ethel, and I *do* hope the poor child will feel that she may rest here and be happy."

Neither mother nor daughters dressed that evening for dinner, rightly concluding that their guest would be too weary to make an elaborate toilet, even if she wished; and presently, whilst they waited, they heard the sound of returning carriage wheels along the frozen drive.

Mrs. Marsden hurried to the hall, the doors were flung wide, and a brilliant flood of light enveloped the two first figures ascending the steps; in the rear, almost in darkness, came a third; but the hostess saw only the motherless girl upon her husband's arm, and her heart warmed towards her.

She was only a slip of a maid, with an abundance of yellow-brown hair, gathered at the back of her head. The face was exquisite in its dainty beauty, which not all the pain of parting with her father, or the pallor engendered by her long journey could dim.

The dark violet eyes were wistful and weary, yet the young mouth looked ready to smile.

Mrs. Marsden took her into her motherly embrace.

"Welcome, dear child, welcome and greeting. I hope you will be very happy with us. Ethel, Jessie, come and be introduced."

As each advanced, tendering a friendly hand, Ailsa's beautiful eyes filled with sudden tears.

"You are very, very good," she said, "you make me feel less lonely and afraid. I did not think you would be so kind to me, a stranger. I hope, oh, yes, I hope so much, one day I may be able to repay you."

But this was the sort of conversation to which "the tyrants" would not listen, and they were hurrying her away, when Mr. Marsden said—

"Girls, have you forgotten your old friend Lucian Gore? Come, show yourself, Gore; you're not so changed you need fear non-recognition."

It was then the third figure stepped from the darkness into the light.

"Oh, Mr. Gore, is it really you?" cried Ethel, pausing at the foot of the staircase, "when did you return? And how nice it will be to see Riversmead open once more!"

"Mr. Marsden found me on the platform," answered the new comer. "I was returning disgusted to town; for somehow my letter apprising Mrs. Tyler of my coming did not reach her, and there was no place where I could rest the sole of my foot or get a decent meal."

"So I brought him along," broke in Mr. Marsden in jovial fashion. "I said 'the more the merrier,' and I felt certain mamma could put him up for a day or two."

"With pleasure," responded the lady. "We are very glad to have you, Mr. Gore."

"I wish mamma would speak for herself," remarked Jessie as they went upstairs. "I distinctly dislike our friend and neighbour."

"But why, Jessie? He is rather handsome than not, and pleasant company."

"I can't help that; I can't imagine any one *really* liking him. But, of course," gaily, "'one man's meat is another man's poison,' and I suppose the old saying applies to either sex. But let me help you with your wraps, Ailsa; you see we don't intend to stand upon ceremony with you; we are to be good friends and comrades."

"I hope so; it is very good of you to be so cordial."

She spoke with the slightest accent, which the girls considered pretty; only in moments of excitement did she lapse into broader dialect, and then she would pronounce very as "fery," and is as "iss," for Ailsa Macgregor had never until now left her native land.

She was not lachrymose, only showed a natural regret over her father's departure, and despite her frank ways had been with the Marsdens more than a week without so much as mentioning her lover's name, or her sad little romance.

"Perhaps," said Jessie, "she is forgetting," but Ethel answered, "Not yet; you have but to look into her eyes to know that, as pitiful as her story is, just so true is her heart. I have a fancy that Flora Macdonald was very like our Ailsa."

CHAPTER II.

The Marsdens were in town; Mr. Lucian Gore had accompanied them in their flight, once more leaving Riversmead to the servants.

"I shall feel so remote, unfriended, solitary, slow," he had said looking into Ailsa's eyes, "if I remain here, and so I have determined to go to town with you if only to witness your triumphs. I can have my own chambers and I confess country life has no charms for me, save under very exceptional circumstances."

And she, opening her blue eyes wide, had answered,—

"That is strange; I like the solitude and the quiet. You cannot imagine how lonely it is at Lachlan, or how grand; father and I enjoy that loneliness. We never grew tired of each other's society, though often we had not seen a fresh face for weeks—when the snow is on the hills it is difficult to reach us—very often we would not get our letters for nine or ten days after they were due."

"Dreadful," said Lucian. "I should die of *ennui* in such a place; and do you know I am wondering how you will bear transplanting to town. There is no place like it; all day and all night the streets are alive with folks, the noises never seem to cease; I prophesy you will be bewildered —perhaps like many another you will hate Londou, and forswear it for ever."

She laughed softly.

"I do not think I shall; I have a fancy I shall enjoy my visit very much; I shall like looking into the shop windows, and thinking what I would buy for everybody I know, if only I were rich. Then there are so many beautiful and historical places, I have longed all my life to visit —you must not say one word to spoil my hopes and dreams."

"Heaven forbid *I* should spoil your happiness," he said with more fervour than the occasion warranted; then leaning over her, he asked,—

"Why do you wear that little posy ring, Miss Macgregor?"

"As a sign of my betrothal," she answered, flushing hotly, "but I think you had no right to ask that question, being but a very new friend."

"I beg your pardon, and accept your rebuke which I richly deserved."

And then he looked so contrite that Ailsa was grieved at her own harshness, the more so, because she did not know what to say to atone for it.

On the night of her first appearance in society, both Ethel and Jessie went into sincere raptures, over her beauty and dainty attire.

The latter was simple enough, being of soft white cashmere with some early forget-me-nots at her breast and throat, whilst her wealth of yellow-brown hair, dressed in Greek fashion, was adorned with a fillet of gold set with turquoise.

Ethel stooping, kissed the broad white brow with more of tenderness than she often showed whilst Jessie cried gaily,—

"Mamma, come see this strange swan amidst your own ugly ducklings, and lament openly 'I cannot call her mine.'"

Ailsa blushing and protesting very much, turned a troubled face to Mrs. Marsden.

"Oh, I wish they would not say such things, for they are not true. Ethel and Jessie are tall and stately—*they* can never be insignificant; I am always wishing I were more like them."

"My dear Ailsa, don't propose starting a Mutual Admiration Society," laughed Ethel, lightly, "it is sure to fall through, for neither Jessie nor I have any courtier-like qualities," and she forthwith whisked the girl downstairs.

As "the tyrants" had predicted, Ailsa was the centre of observation as they entered Mrs. Cathcart's handsome ball-room, and she was so delightfully unconscious of it all.

It seemed to her unsophisticated mind, that all were determined to be kind to her; she had so many partners that she forgot their names, and often their turns; and but for the memory of someone languishing in a prison cell she would have been most happy.

But she could not forget, and when Lucian Gore led her to a seat after their waltz, he saw that the dark eyes were shining through a mist of tears.

"What is it?" he said, leaning over her so that he might screen her from observation. "What is vexing you? Will not you treat me as a friend?"

A little shudder passed over her drooping figure, then she said in a low voice,—

"Nothing has vexed me; all are good to me, but Mr. Gore, I have been thinking. Ought I to take the good things of life, whilst one I love is so unfortunate, so wretched that I seem to sin against him when I take all the bright and pleasant things offered me."

"You refer of course to your *fiancé*," returned Lucian in a voice he vainly strove to make natural. "I cannot understand how a man who has won you can be wretched?"

"Oh, this is flattery and cruelty combined; I do not want idle compliments," with a petulant gesture. "Mr. Gore, I thought you were above that sort of thing. How can you expect my con-

fidence when you are making fun of me the while!"

"On my life," he began, when a dashing young officer advancing, said cheerily,—

"*Our* waltz, Miss Macgregor," and conveyed her away.

Lucian stood watching them a moment musing,—

"What is there so mysterious about this lover, why does *her* face always change and sadden when she speaks of him? I must ask Ethel. I used to think one day I should make *her* my wife but that is over and done with; Ailsa has taught me a sharp lesson—I am not invulnerable—I can love like other men, and her *fiancé* must look well to his treasure or I shall wrest it from him."

That night when the girls, partially disrobed, sat toasting their toes upon the fender, Ethel remarked,—

"How grave you are, Ailsa. You look as though you had the cares of nations upon your shoulders; come, tell me what is in your mind, and you shall have the usual penny."

"I was thinking of Walter," the girl answered, simply, and then a dead silence fell upon them all, for this was not a subject to be discussed, seeing the Major had forbidden all intercourse between the lovers, and had begged Mrs. Marsden to eradicate, if possible, all thought of Walter Eltringham from her young charge's mind.

For a little while Ailsa was silent, then she said in a low voice,—

"Father, I believe, told Mr. Marsden all before I came amongst you."

"Yes," said Jessie, stretching out a friendly hand, "and we were *so* sorry for you."

"You should have been most sorry for *him*," answered Ailsa, dreamily, "everybody pitied me; no one had compassion on Walter. From the first he was judged guilty; and when he pleaded his innocence no one believed him. Some one had robbed Mr. Mostyn, and because he, Walter would often stay behind to do extra work, always eager to improve his condition—and all for my sake, suspicion fell on him, but he could not stoop to be a thief, only—only," and her head drooped low, "they found marked money in his desk, and, not knowing how true and honest a gentleman he is, they had him arrested."

Silence again; neither Ethel nor Jessie shared in her belief, but neither had the heart to say so; only Ailsa was quick to read their thoughts, and spoke again hurriedly.

"I cannot ask you to have that faith in him which sustains me; I don't know quite why I have told you so much; but nothing will ever shake my confidence in him. I am waiting, always waiting, for the day of his release; for the blessed time when he shall come to me saying, 'Ailsa, I have cleared my name from obloquy and now nothing stands between us.' Oh," breaking into bitter tears, "it iss fery hard to stand so much alone; harder still to know that whilst I dwell in the sunshine he lives in the darkness of night—your sympathy is good, but how much better it would be if you could say truly, 'Ailsa, it is we who believe with your belief, and we who are fery indignant your Walter should be so ill-used."

"You forget," Ethel said ever so gently, "that we do not even know Mr. Eltringham; but you must remember that always you have our love and our pity—almost you make me your lover's ally, for surely no man who could stoop to petty crime could find a home in your heart;" then rising, the sisters kissed her and departed, leaving her a little comforted by their love. It was drawing near now to the time of Walter's release, but she had faithfully promised that dear father, now so far away and in such peril, not to communicate with him—and it almost broke her heart when she thought, perhaps, he would believe her false and forgetful. Then, too, as the days wore by she began to be troubled by Lucian Gore's attentions, which, when they were alone, were very pronounced; in the presence of the sisters he scarcely addressed her, appearing to be devoted to Ethel, who, in response to his cleverly worded questions had confided to him all Ailsa's sad story, not knowing that she was working harm, or how bitter to herself would be the awakening. She had always entertained a liking for this handsome, well-bred neighbour of theirs, but all unconsciously she was drifting into love for him, and he cared less than nothing for her.

But how was she to guess this when looks and tones conveyed so much more than words to her mind, and a great new joy possessed her which she did not seek to analyse. It was enough that she was happy, that he was ever near; only when she began to make excuses to herself for Ailsa's *folly*, she should have guessed the truth.

To Lucian Gore, who had never in all his twenty-eight years experienced a "fancy" for any woman in particular, this over-mastering passion for Ailsa was almost terrible. He loved her without reason, in despite of reason; he could not even brook the thought that another man had held her in his arms, pressed kisses on those sweet lips, whispered words of love to her listening ear.

"It is impossible that she should still care for *that* fellow," he mused; "perhaps she clings to him through a passionate sense of duty; but when she sees him in his degradation, she will shrink from him with loathing; what more natural, then, that she should turn to me. Neither he nor any other man shall steal her from me—my heart and my life are empty without her."

It was a week later when he walked into the Row with her, Mrs. Marsden and Jessie following; the latter distinctly disliked him, so was heartily glad that in the absence of Ethel he fell to Ailsa's share.

Ailsa was paler than usual, the sweet face was almost ethereal, with its dreamy eyes, under which were faint indications of tears and sleeplessness. Even the low voice was changed, a note of languor running through it; because—this thing she had told none—three days ago Walter Eltringham had been released, and of his subsequent movements she knew nothing. Remembering his proud and passionate nature, she feared that he might even take his life, for ill could he endure disgrace or contumely, and as she lay sleepless on her bed she had wept and prayed, prayed and wept again. There were tears for her own helplessness and his woes, entreaties to Heaven to show him mercy and vouchsafe him justice.

Now, as she walked she scarcely heard, and certainly did not understand one word that Lucian Gore uttered; he saw this, and said almost pettishly,—

"Do you always live in dreamland, Miss Macgregor? or do you wish by your silence and inattention to convey the idea to my dense mind that I am a bore?"

She was gazing straight before her, and he followed the direction of her glance; suddenly from out of the crowd of loungers he singled one face—youthful, handsome, but despite of youth and beauty, haggard and worn beyond measure. The grey eyes full of imploring, whilst despairing, were rivetted upon Ailsa, and, as if magnetised by them, she looked fully into them—then a strange thing happened—with a low cry she left Lucian's side, and the loungers fell back to make a passage for her—on she went until she reached *that* spot—then she stood thunderstruck, for amidst the seething crowd the one she sought had disappeared. She tried to cry his name aloud, but failed—her lips were cold and stiff, her senses were numbed. Like one in a dream she saw Lucian approach, felt him take her by the hand and gently lead her to a seat; heard those around say pityingly,—

"Poor girl! how ill she looks. I thought she was going to faint," then she put up her trembling hands to hide her face, whilst brokenly she murmured to Jessie,—

"It was Walter, and he is afraid of me;" Lucian Gore's wearing inwardly, cursed "the gaol-bird."

CHAPTER III.

"GEORDIE, Geordie! can you spare me a few minutes; I *must* speak, I shall go mad if I keep silence!"

The speaker was a young man of handsome yet haggard appearance. His eyes, which were wide and well-opened, were grey; his well-shaped head was adorned with rippling brown hair, which required to be kept short to prevent it curling; and for all his queer-cut "pepper-and-salt" clothes, he looked a gentleman.

The man addressed, who was considerably his senior, removed a short, dirty pipe from his lips, ran his hands ruefully through his thin, long locks before he said,—

"Go-ahead now; I'm here to listen, it's you can do the talking. Don't fash yourself about the wark; I'm nae the mon to advocate extra punctuality."

Thus encouraged his companion began,—

"Geordie, I've seen *her*."

"*Indeed!*" drily. "'Tis that, I reckon, that took ye to the Row. It's growing a masher ye are, Walter. Well, and she cut ye, of course?"

"No, no! I saw her coming, and got as near as I could to look at her bonny face once more; and all of a sudden she lifted her eyes full to mine. Then she gave a little cry; I don't know what she said, but I saw her run towards me with her dear hands outstretched, her face grown white; and I pushed my way through the crowd, hiding myself easily from her. How could I meet her thus? How could I disgrace her in the eyes of her friends by claiming even casual acquaintance with her? But, oh Geordie, it went against the grain so to ignore her greeting!"

"Of course," grimly; "though she's forgot ye these mony months, ye believe in her still? 'Tis the way with some! Mon, if ye were wise, ye would think na mair of Ailsa Macgregor. Is't likely she'll wed thee? True, she may love ye, but she'll maybe gie her hand to anither, who can offer her gold and siller galore, and a name that's clean. *That* hurts ye, lad? Well, I speak for your gude." And he resumed his pipe.

"But, Geordie," persisted the young man, "you are always so bitter against women, and you cannot have much experience concerning them and their ways. Then, you don't know Ailsa, she's like no other girl; she is loyal and single-hearted."

"Oh, ay! she is perfection! She sings divinely, dances like an angel, smiles like a seraph, has eyes as blue as summer skies!"

"Geordie, but for your goodness to me, I should think you callous."

"Ye wad na be far oot of your reckoning. See, I pit it straight to ye. Has na Major Macgregor cancelled your engagement and sent his daughter to those who will keep her safe fra thee and thy machinations? Are ye not branded as a thief? The vera clothes ye wear were furnished by Her Majesty. Do ye think if ye went to a young lass saying I love ye, but I have naething to offer but my heart; my hand is empty, my reputation gone; if ye marry me ye wed misery; that she wad be fule enough to take ye? Go to! women love gew-gaws and pleasure; they are slight and false. Wash your hands of 'em, mon, and start free!"

"You don't, you *can't* understand; if you but learned all the beauty of Ailsa's nature, you would honour all women for her sake. Geordie, she is my heaven, my joy, the one good thing left to me! If you would take her from me you reduce me to despair."

"Puir lad, puir lad! there is na ony woman worth caring for like that. 'Tis true your Ailsa has a sonsie face; ah, I have seen her. I found her oot when I kenned how your heart was set upon her, and it's borne on my mind she's happy enough. Even whilst ye were pining in prison she had smiles for the dark mon, who is aye wi' her and her friends."

Walter Eltringham cried out sharply, then,—

"Geordie, for the love of Heaven, don't cut the ground from beneath my feet. If you teach me distrust of *her*, then I am indeed a lost man!"

Then Georgie Railmont rose, a wild and unkempt figure.

"Lad, hear me," he cried, dropping wholly into his Scotch accent, "there's a wee bit of my life I am fain to tell you, though these mony years I've hidden it from all the warld. Say frankly, how do men speak of me? Do not they call me, 'Geordie the Tosspot,' the fule for aye company I enter? Do not they say 'He has

brains, but he drowns them; he is a ne'er-do-well, who might ha' make his mark, but prefers to write pot-boilers. He works best when the liquor is in—he is niver to be depended on—his copy is niver in to time. Ay lad, ay, your honest face answers for ye. And was I always so? my Heaven *no*! I started with fair prospects. I had the power and the will to rise—yet I fell, *all through a woman*. I had great grand dreams mon, of reforming the world, of righting wrongs, of helping the helpless! Where are they? all gone, *and through a woman*.

"I had courage and hope; a woman stole them away. I had a good name and mony friends—*she* robbed me of baith. Ah, lad! lad! better to remain as ye are than warm a viper in your breast. This woman—this evil, false weak wretch, was my wife.

"She was fair as the dawn to look upon; she had sweet ways, and a gentle voice, and I loved her with my whole strength. She was a poor lassie of humble parentage—my friends called me fule, and prophesied ruin for me when I married—I laughed them all to scorn. I made a nest for my dove—the best my hands and brains could provide—an' I took her into it. Fra sunrise to sundune, I workit for her, and I was happy, even when ends wadna meet—for 'twas na lang before I found a wife an expensive luxury. I didna complain; she was young and inexperienced—I reasoned gently wi' her, and she stormed in return.

"It was then I first saw something of her true nature, but I lo'ed her so well, I blinded myself to her faults—and even when the crash came I took her in my arms, telling her not to weep so sorely for our wee bits o' goods, for I would work hard to win her just such anither home as we had lost. But times were bad and she grew peevish; when I reached oor bare lodgings tired and hungry there was neither bite nor sup for me, but always she was providing some new bit o' finery for herself. Then I spoke as an angry man speaks, and high words followed.

"One day I went home to find her gone; she had left a badly-written and worse spelled letter behind, saying she was tired o' me and my ways, sick to death o' poverty, and she had gone away with anither man who could gi'e her all she most loved.

"I was like a madman, but when I could hear what the neighbours were saying, I learned what they should have told before—*she* had lang been receiving the veesits of a gentleman—it was easy to blind me, for I was seldom at hame—and doubtless she had gone wi' him. Heaven help him if ever I find him—and Heaven help her!

"From that time I didna care what came to me; leetle by lettle I lost my auld footing—I took to drink to drown my sorrow,—one by one my auld friends turned their backs on me—so I came to London and I found wark—wark I hate, but I'm fit for naething else now—I'm a lost mon—all for a woman's sake. Better take the Queen's shilling lad, than pin thy faith to a maid."

As his hoarse voice died out, he dropped into a chair, and Walter Eltringham laying a toil-roughened hand upon his shoulder, said in moved tones,—

"Geordie! I never dreamed your life held such a tragedy; I can no longer wonder that you judge a class by the individual—but, forgive me—was *she* worth this terrible price—rouse yourself, you can yet rise to a higher level."

"Nae, nae, lad; I'm guid for naething; I've neither power nor will now to burst my shackles—I am a brute beast."

"You are the only friend remaining to me; am I likely to forget the generous welcome you gave me, or that it is your bread that supports me? Geordie, dear old friend, let us make a fight against the world together, and when we have conquered we will ask Ailsa to make our home glad with her presence."

"I am past fighting; but victory remains for you—only *when* you have conquered, your Ailsa, so dear and sweet, will be the wife of Mr. Lucian Gore," answered Railmont, gloomily, "there, lad, take the whole truth and digest it for your own good. It is common talk that pretty Miss Macgregor's engagement to Gore will be announced before the close of the season. So much for woman's faith; steady lad, steady, there isn't one of her sex worth a tear or a thought, they can't help it, they are born so."

"Railmont, you would not lie to me; on your oath, is this true?"

"I had it from Goshawk, editor of the *Royal Standard*—yes: you may look incredulous, but, mon, there's a certain class of work even he is glad to have drunken Railmont do, and so he's ceevil, mighty ceevil to me always."

Walter sank into his chair breathless, wordless; Ailsa, his Ailsa faithless! then farewell hope, and welcome oblivion. What did it matter now whether he rose or sank? Who was there to care save, perhaps, drunken Geordie, who of all he knew had alone been faithful. It had been during one of his drunken revels that they had first met; it was in Edinburgh and Walter had been a mere lad of eighteen then—the journalist was reeling through the streets, a mob of boys and slatternly women following and jeering at him.

Walter had gone to his rescue, taking him to his own lodgings much to the sour landlady's disgust, and in the morning, when he recovered his senses Railmont's gratitude knew no bounds. It was he who provided funds for Walter's defence out of a purse never too plentifully filled; he, who, on the young man's release, waited for him at the prison gates, and after a strong hand clasp, said,—

"Lad, ye maun come oop wi' me to town; there's nane to ken ye there; and, whilst I can work, ye shall share and share wi' me."

When he had drunk sufficient whisky to make him sentimental he would say, with tears in his eyes,—

"Ay, lad, I'll ne'er forget your goodness. I was a stranger and ye took me in—sick, and in prison—nae, nae, I dinna mean to recall that place to your memory;" now, as he looked at Walter, he said,—

"Dinna take it so to heart, mon; there's mony another as fair as she; wipe her name clean out of the book and start afresh."

But the unhappy young fellow made no reply, and when Geordie had gone out to quench the raging fires of his thirst in large potations of beer, he flung his arms wide before him, and burst into the terrible tears of strong manhood.

"Ailsa! *my* Ailsa! well, two years have gone since we parted; it is a long while to remain faithful to a disgraced lover, and so my girl, my little girl, it must be my endeavour to forgive you."

Then there came upon him the fierce longing to see her once again, and rising he went out into the unquiet streets; he knew well where to find her, and reaching the house which enshrined his jewel he lifted his eyes to the drawing-room windows, which were opened wide, for the night was sultry. And there he saw her, fairer than ever, with white roses in her hair, white roses at her breast; above her bowed the man he had seen with her in the Row. She smiled in response to something he said, and Walter clenched his teeth to keep back the bitter oath which rose from his heart to his lips.

Well, well, it was better so; far better she should forget him and be happy than remembering him be sunk in sadness. But there was nothing left to live for now—better to end it all than to fall into the slough which threatened to engulf Geordie Railmont.

"Poor Geordie!" he thought with a sigh, "scarcely a soul he knows thinks him worthy a handclasp, and yet, out of all my friends, he alone is loyal."

CHAPTER IV.

The season was ended and Lucian Gore had found no opportunity to declare himself; he began to suspect that Ailsa avoided him, simply to make him more eager in his pursuit of her, and yet, holding this opinion, he neither loved or esteemed her less. He sometimes imagined she was jealous of the attention he had paid Ethel, and began to wish he had not gone quite so far; for, without vanity he could say that her deep eyes brightened at his approach, her cheeks took an added colour, and her voice had a subtle inflection of tenderness when she addressed him. He had used her as a blind to his real intention, afraid lest Ailsa might be startled into fear of him; now he thought he had been needlessly cautious. But they were back at Lyndhurst now; no longer was the girl besieged by a small crowd of admirers and Lucian Gore fully believed his chance had come. He was resolved to move carefully, to pay strictest attention to the proprieties, feeling that Mr. Marsden would be doubly careful of his friend's daughter, it being a point of honour with him to guard her from the overtures of any ineligible *parti*. Consequently, he invited Mr. Marsden to dinner at Riversmead, and over the walnuts and wine broached the subject so near his heart. His guest had no idea that Ethel was in any way affected by this proposal, so answered readily,—

"Why, my dear Gore, nothing could be more satisfactory; Macgregor, of course, broke off the early engagement, and I fancy the young man, despite his delinquencies, has sense sufficient to see *it won't do*. However that may be, he has not returned to approach Ailsa, and I have it on good authority that she never mentions his name. Either the flame has burned out, or, she is hurt by his silence; that is a matter you must decide for yourself, and you shall have the chance to-morrow, dine with us, it will be easy for you to contrive the rest;" and, with that understanding, they parted. It chanced that the following morning Ailsa had one of her periodical head aches and could not appear at breakfast; so, full of his subject, Mr. Marsden imparted it to his wife and daughters.

The wife said "It would be a very suitable marriage," but neither of the girls spoke; Jessie was staring with wide eyes into Ethel's white face, her own heart beating with unaccustomed force. All in an instant she saw her sister hide her quivering lips behind her handkerchief and rising swiftly she cried,—

"Mamma, Ethel is ill, it is the heat, you stay with papa and I will get her to her room."

Mrs. Marsden pushed back her chair, but at the sound, Ethel said,—

"Stay with papa, dear, it is only sudden giddiness, I shall be myself soon and Jessie will look well after me," so the two tall sisters went out, and in silence, mounted to the room they shared. Then Jessie, loosing her hold of Ethel, confronted her with the question,—

"Is it *so* with you? oh, sister; sister, my instinct did not deceive me.'

Straight and slender stood Ethel a moment, then she answered,

"I did not give my heart unsought; there were a thousand little ways and words by which he won me. But, oh Jessie, Jessie, he was playing with me all the time and I was in deadly earnest! Oh, how shall I bear it? How shall I bear it? Heaven help me! love has come to me in bitter guise; I was so sure of his truth, I did not even try to hide my preference for him. Now he may laugh over my folly, and Ailsa—no, I won't wrong her by a word or thought; she does not guess how her joy must be my bane."

"I would not like to stand in Lucian Gore's shoes," remarked Jessie, viciously; "oh! he will be punished nicely, for, if I read Ailsa, aright, she detests him. You have no need to fear a rival in her; but my dear, my dear you *will* try to put him out of your mind, your heart; he is not worthy you."

"Worthy or unworthy, I shall love him so long as I live," Ethel answered, twisting her hands together in an agony of pain."

"My poor dear! my poor dear!" Jessie kept murmuring as she embraced her sister; "what can I say or do to comfort you?"

"Nothing, nothing! Oh, believe me, I am not ungrateful, but the blow *was* so sharp, so unexpected; and never for an instant did I dream he cared for Ailsa; he always seemed to avoid her, scarcely ever addressed her."

"But I remember now that when you were absent he monopolised her. If only I had dreamed of danger to you I might have averted it. Oh, why was I so blind? and why must such

a good girl as you give your heart to so mean and false a creature?"

"You will keep my secret inviolate?" Ethel said; "the shame of giving myself so readily to one who spurned the *gift*, is hard enough to bear, it would be worse—infinitely worse were it known to others. You will not say one word even to mamma, promise, and I shall be strong enough, by and by, to hide my pain even from *him*."

Then, suddenly, she broke down into bitter weeping, whilst Jessie alternately fondled her and railed against Lucian.

Ethel did not again leave her chamber that day, but lay with drawn blinds, her face hidden amongst her pillows, fighting with her love and sorrow, praying humbly for strength to bear the cross laid upon her. And in the evening Lucian Gore arrived.

He was not nearly so brilliant a companion as usual, for despite all his self-assurance, he *was* doubtful of the issue of his proposal.

Jessie was just a trifle colder in manner towards him, but this he did not notice because all his attention was riveted upon Ailsa, who, having recovered her usual tone, had appeared at table.

She wore white, as she always did when weather or function permitted, and at her breast was a cluster of purple heather sent direct from her home by an old and humble friend.

The anxiety concerning her lover, the suspense she had so long endured, had robbed her cheeks of their dainty bloom, but to Lucian she was more beautiful than ever, with that dreamy look in her lovely eyes, and just the faintest droop curving the lines of her exquisite mouth.

It was not at all a hard matter to lure her into the gardens, for the night was sultry, and at all times Ailsa loved open-air life. So she stepped through the French window upon the level lawn, inhaling with satisfaction the heavy scent of the carnations, the delicate odour of jasmine and mignonette.

As they disappeared Jessie thought, vindictively,—

"May you ask and be denied; may the same measure be meted to you as you have meted to my sister."

But Mrs. Marsden said,—

"They will make a handsome couple, and the Major would be relieved to hear of their engagement."

"I hope such news will never reach him!" Jessie said so sharply that her mother looked surprisedly at her, and afraid lest she had said more than was either wise or well, she hastened to add,—

"I like to think of Ailsa as faithful to one love. She has always been my ideal woman, in that respect, since she came amongst us."

Upstairs Ethel, seated by her window, peering through the curtains at those two shadowy figures, growing ever more vague in the distance, was crying to her heart,—

"Patience, patience! why should you care if she should give herself to him, seeing that you are less than nothing to him, and will win nothing by her refusal!"

Now she could see them no longer, they had reached the confines of the grounds. On the road, just beyond the hedge, stood a young man, his eyes, as they rested on Ailsa, were full of a passionate love, his face was white and stern for to-night he had travelled to Lyndhurst to speak for the last time with the girl he loved, and then to leave her free to wed where her heart had strayed.

He recognised her companion with a wild pang of jealousy; even here he had followed her, and was permitted access to her.

Presently he saw Lucian take her hand in his; he could not hear what words he said, he could not see her face it was so shaded by the light wrap she had thrown about her head and shoulders. But this was what Lucian was saying,—

"Ailsa, ever since I first saw you I have loved you, only I have lacked the courage to tell you this. Beloved, your past is known to me, I am well aware that I can never be your first love, but I am content to have the aftermath, believing as I do that in time I can win you wholly to myself. My darling, my beautiful darling, at least bid me hope."

In her pity for the pain she must inflict she did not withdraw her hand. Her soft voice was more gentle than ever as she murmured,—

"I can give you neither love nor hope, I can only pray you to try with might and main to put me out of your thoughts. Mr. Gore—no—no—" as he would have spoken, "hear me to the end, because trouble and shame have fallen upon the man to whom I have given my heart, I cannot desert him. Sorrow comes to all, but it is easier borne than when it goes hand-in-hand with shame, and that unmerited. My faith in him is just as perfect as when we plighted troth, my love more deep and pure."

"He is a common thief," Lucien cried, half-crushing the hand he held in his vehemence, "a common thief, worthy only scorn and hate; surely you would not link your life to his!"

"When he says come I shall go to him, and" (here her voice began to tremble) "it iss ferry unfair to judge a man without true cause." She snatched her fingers from his clasp. "I love Walter with all my heart, and no one shall shake my trust in him. Oh, yes, I am ferry sorry for you, and it iss my hope you will forget, because I can never give you any other answer."

Ah, the light of love in her true eyes! If only the watcher could have seen, how differently he would have judged her.

Lucian, beside himself with love and despair—for, indeed, her look, her voice gave confirmation to her words—suddenly caught her close to his breast, kissing her with a very madness of passion. A groan broke from Walter's lips.

"False! false!" he muttered, heavily; and turning fled, hopeless, blind and sick, with outraged love. If he had paused he would have seen Ailsa struggle out of the embrace she loathed, all the pity gone from her eyes, her face flushed with angry shame. He would have heard her voice ringing clear and indignant on the night air,

"Mr. Gore, you have forgotten yourself and outraged me. It iss not pity I feel for you; but a strong desire to punish your impertinence as it deserves. It iss ferry brave indeed to insult a maid who has neither kith nor kin near to protect her;" and lifting her skirts with trembling hands, she ran like a deer through the long lush grass, leaving him to curse his fate and the madness which had tempted him to snatch those kisses from her sweet lips.

After he left Lyndhurst Walter Eltringham scarcely knew what he did, his brain was in a ferment, his heart was in hot revolt against his cruel fate.

He wandered from place to place in an aimless way, sometimes laughing aloud over his folly, at others reviling the world and its ways. He was on the verge of delirium, although he did not guess this, and it was not until two days later he presented himself before the anxious and now sober Geordie Railmont. Then his hat was decorated with tricolourd ribbons. With a shrill laugh he flung it down upon the table.

"Heaven save and help us!" cried Geordie, "What's the meaning o' this?"

"I've sold myself body and soul to Her Gracious Majesty for the magnificent sum of one shilling! Three cheers for the army;" and like a log he dropped to the ground.

CHAPTER V.

The next day Walter was in a raging fever, and Geordie hovered about him with all a woman's tenderness and solicitude. If ever an angel of mercy appeared in queer guise it was he. His long ruddy brown hair and beard, his inflamed features gave him a *bizarre* appearance, yet the heart within him was warm and tender; and it yearned with love unspeakable over the lad who once had befriended him.

As the day wore by, and the fever increased in fury, he sent for a local practitioner; then he called in a respectable woman to watch over the patient during his absence.

Considering his manifest anxiety the nurse was surprised by his long absence, and by the jubilant expression he wore on his return. She thought "Drunken Geordie" had been indulging in one of his revels, until he produced a well-filled purse, out of which he abstracted quite a pile of gold.

"There," he said, giving the ribbon-adorned hat a vicious kick, "that's all ended. It cost a shilling to put on the fal-lals—it takes many a piece of siller to be quit of 'em. But I've got the means to buy him off; he's reserved for something better than rank-and-file. I've been to every blessed poolblsher who holds an article of mine, and they've been generous to Drunken Geordie for once, paying up to a man, even though the payments don't fall due for a week or two. That lad's dear to me, ma'am, and I'm not going to see him lost; you may go home and get a wee bit rest before the morn—but first gie me the whisky, I'll need a refresher in the dour night."

She ventured a remonstrance, adding,—

"If you take the drink, Mr. Railmont, you'll fall asleep, and then how will your friend fare?"

"Sleep is it! Woman you're oot of it; it's an article I am bound to finish the night; I've drawn the cash for it, and my honour's at stake. Gie me the whisky and go. You may trust me," and when she returned in the morning she found he was true to his word.

The article was completed; all Walter's wants had been carefully supplied, and haggard, weary, anxious as he was, Geordie Railmont refused to rest until he had been "oot to see after the lad's discharge."

He was uncouth, unkempt, not at all a picturesque good Samaritan. Yet surely one who reads the hearts of men, saw much that was beautiful yet in that fallen and degraded creature. Day and night whilst the sun rose, whilst the hot hours grew hotter yet, even from dawn to dusk he watched beside his comrade.

Two loves he had known—the love of wife and friend—the former had been but a curse to him, the latter had served to brighten many hours of his dark and ruined life. The lad was dear to him; if he died small hope of reformation was there for "Drunken Geordie;" but the days lengthened into weeks, and still Walter tossed to and fro upon his bed calling piteously for Ailsa, knowing neither nurse nor friend, and then Geordie resolved that cruel as the short parting would be, he would go down to Lyndhurst and interview this lass who was not worthy to loose the latchet of her lover's shoe.

He started quite early in the morning, which was contrary to his habits, for amongst other faults he numbered that of the sluggard. When he reached Lyndhurst he stayed at the Railway Tavern to quench his thirst, then, hat in hand, went tearing down the main road like one who is bent on an errand of life or death.

It was easy to find the Marsdens' residence, and advancing to the house he boldly asked for Miss MacGregor; being moved by thoughts of Walter languishing on his bed, he dropped into his broadest dialect, and after a careful survey of the rough figure the servant was about to close the door upon him when Ailsa herself entered the hall.

She went swiftly forward, looking so beautiful and kind that but for his black and bitter experience of womanhood and his doubts of her, he must have yielded her admiration and respect.

"I think you asked for me," she said with her gentle smile, "and I am quite certain by your speech that you are a countryman of mine. Will you come in here and tell me your business?" and she led the way into an adjoining room; then closing the door she confronted him, waiting for him to speak.

"You are Ailsa MacGregor, daughter of Major Angus Macgregor?"

"Yes," she answered, and could say no more, fearing ill news of her father.

"Well then, I guessed ye wad be fain to hear tidings of a lad you loved once; they called him Walter Eltringham, he was a bonny lad, but trouble befell him, still he never lost hope until he lost you. Ailsa MacGregor as a proud woman you should be to-day, for your falshood has laid him low—he's dying!"

"*Dying!* oh no, no, for Heaven's sake, no!

Who are you that bring me such awful news? Oh Walter! Walter!" and in her agitation she laid her hand upon the shabby sleeve, crying again, "Who are you?"

"Drunken Geordie," savagely, "the only one of all his friends who stuck to him in his trouble. Ailsa Macgregor, day and night he calls on you, he will not be comforted, and all his strength is slipping from him; the sands of life are ebbing fast—but false and evil as you are, he cannot go until he has seen your face once more."

"Why do you call me false? Heaven knows I have never wavered in my faith, or my love. Oh, tell him that, say that day and night my prayers go with him, my heart follows him."

"Did it follow him when he stood outside the garden and saw Lucian Gore hold you in his arms, kiss you at his pleasure? Ah lass, you're a liar like the rest of your sex."

But she broke in hurriedly,—

"Walter saw that? Then I no longer wonder his faith in me is shaken! Oh, if I had but known, if I had but guessed how near he was, all this grief and sickness had been spared. It is true Mr. Gore insulted me by his caresses—but—but I sent him away; I have never loved, I never shall love any man but Walter."

"It is ower easy to protest, lassie," said Geordie, softening a little, "but how am I to ken whether ye speak truth or no. What will ye do to prove ye are loyal; to give the lie to the rumours afloat concerning ye."

"Anything, anything. Oh, he must not believe I could fail him in his hour of need. Mr. Geordie, you shall be my adviser. What ought I to do?"

"Go to him," grimly, "naething else can save him from the jaws o' death."

She hesitated a moment, whilst he watched her with cynical eyes, then she said,—

"It is a hard thing to ask of a maid, a fery hard thing to leave home on an unknown journey with an unknown guide, but I trust you because you are Walter's friend, and you do not look like one who would willingly and wilfully deceive. You are old enough, Mr. Geordie, to be my father and as my father I will trust you. With the exception of the servants, I am all alone in the house, you will excuse me whilst I write an explanatory letter, and in the meanwhile you will allow me to send in refreshments."

Before he could answer she was gone, and presently a servant appeared with such a *recherché* meal as Geordie Railmont had not so much as seen for many a year.

He looked at the wine and longed for it, yet the shaking hand was strong enough to put it aside.

"I won't disgrace her; it seems to me she's a 'eal lass, and she shan't blush for me on the homeward way," so very much against the grain, he drank water in lieu of wine, and none but those who knew him best could tell what a sacrifice this was to him.

Presently Ailsa came down; she was very white but quite composed, and it was evident that she was not going on a brief visit, for she had packed a large portmanteau, which necessitated a drive to the station.

The servants looked askance as she left the house in company with Geordie Railmont, but if she knew this she gave no sign.

They reached London at last, and although Ailsa did her best to hide her dismay, Geordie saw very plainly that she shrank from the squalid surroundings of his home; but he made no remark; only when he had let himself in with his latch-key, he heard her catch her breath sharply, and saw her reel against the wall.

In an instant his arm was supporting her.

"Are ye nae strong enough to go on wi' the matter? It's awfu' drear and dirty here, but it's better in the lad's room. Mrs. Carter is a mitherly body, but if—— "

"Oh, let us go up," broke in poor Ailsa, "I was foolish to be dismayed by dirty stairs and noisome odours. But it haas been a fery trying day, and I didna' ken I should see anything sae wretched."

She had dropped into the familiar dialect; it sounded sweet to Geordie, as uttered by her musical, plaintive voice; but he did not intend to succumb wholly to her fascinations, until he had tried and proved her, so he gruffly bade her follow him, and presently they reached Walter's room.

A tiny lamp burned upon the table, emitting anything but a pleasant odour; a woman sat beside the bed, and on it, tossing his arms to and fro lay Walter.

As they opened the door he was crying aloud,—

"Lost! lost! all lost! position, honour, Ailsa. Ha, ha, ha, strange that such things should be! *Ailsa, Ailsa, Ailsa!*"

She ran forward and, kneeling down, put an arm beneath his head, whilst Geordie Railmont signalled Mrs. Carter to leave them; then he stood watching, and presently the girl's tender voice broke the momentary stillness.

"I am here, dear Walter, and I will never leave you until you are strong and well. Do you hear? Can you understand? Oh, try, try, for it breaks my heart to see you thus."

"*Ailsa, Ailsa, Ailsa!* they have buried me deep, but I can see and hear yet—*she* is happy with *him*, whilst outside I stand shivering—and I loved her best. I had nothing but my heart to give her. She took it in her little hand—her little white, cruel hand and she crushed it—and as it broke she laughed. You would not think that she could be so hard—she has such soft eyes such winning ways; she looks all truth—but I—I know her better——"

"Walter, my darling, oh, my darling," cried the girl, rising suddenly, and the tears which coursed down her cheeks fell upon his fevered face, "of all cruel things this doubt of me is hardest to bear," then, bending, she kissed him again and again praying all the while that Heaven would be merciful and give her back her lover, renewing his old trust in her; and Geordie Railmont, with a pang of jealousy, thought,—

"No wonder he loves her best, for she is as good as she is lovely."

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Marsden pounced upon them, and vainly both strove to shake Ailsa's resolve; to Geordie's joy she held fast by it.

"It is my duty to stay," she said, simply, "even papa will not be angry when he hears all that I have to tell; and although Walter does not recognise me, he is quieter when I am with him. Give my love—my dear love—to Ethel and Jessie and ask them not to think too harshly of me."

Finding it was impossible to shake her in her purpose, Mrs. Marsden volunteered to stay with her, saying,—

"It is not right that you should remain here alone; I am answerable to your father for your welfare," and she tried hard not to show her annoyance.

But when she was admitted into the sick chamber, saw the handsome young face—etherealised by illness—lying upon the pillows, she turned suddenly and caught Ailsa in her motherly arms.

"My dear, he never did it. With that face he could not, and please Heaven all will come right for you soon," then, and only then, Ailsa broke down.

It was easy to obtain possession of the two adjoining rooms, as the tenant occupying them left the following day—and one was devoted to Geordie Railmont's service, whilst the second was set apart for the use of Mrs. Marsden and Ailsa, under whose loving care Walter soon began to show signs of improvement.

CHAPTER VI.

With infinite care and trouble, with infinite love and tenderness, they brought him back from the jaws of death; but when consciousness returned to him, Geordie utterly forbade Ailsa to enter his room until he had prepared him for seeing her.

"He's weak as a bairn yet," he said, "and it wad be mad to subject him to any shock, lass;" so Geordie went in alone.

Helpless as a child, Walter sat propped up by his pillows; he was so weak, so listless, that "life itself seemed at fault" in him, but he greeted his friend with a faint smile, though his words conveyed a reproach.

"Why did you do it, Geordie? Why did you pull me through this illness, just that I might once again 'take arms against a sea of troubles.' It's no use, old man, no use; opposition is all in vain; I've tried it, now I cry for quarter; I'm too weak to struggle any longer with my fate."

"Hoot, mon, you're ower young to cave in like this; maybe I bring news to hearten ye, maybe we've been fules together, but that's no reason why we should remain in our folly," then little by little he told him of the great wrong they had done Ailsa, of her unswerving love and loyalty, until—because he was so very weak—tears filled the poor lad's eyes.

"Take it softly," remarked Geordie, in his roughest tone, "or it's naething mair wild horses shall drag from me; that's better: now for the end of the story," and he proceeded to tell how Ailsa had journeyed to town with him, had nursed him (Walter) unceasingly, and how she and Mrs. Marsden were still in the house. Fairly broken down, Walter sobbed—

"Bring her to me, Geordie that I may, if possible, win her forgiveness——"

"Well then quiet ye, ye blathering idiot; it's a poor object ye are to gladden a maid's eyes," and blinking his own very furiously, he opened the door calling, "Missy, Miss Ailsa, the lad is calling for ye;" then he heard the soft patter of light feet, the *frou-frou* of a woman's skirts, and there before him stood his own Ailsa, with her true eyes bluer than the heavens looking love into his, and the smiles all struggling with the tears.

In an instant she was beside him, her arms beneath his head, her lips pressed to his, and in his heart he was thanking Heaven for her love. Presently he spoke—

"Oh, my love, my love, if I could serve you all my life I never could repay your goodness; as it is, Ailsa, we shall be parted for six long years. Geordie has told you that I have taken the Queen's shilling, and now I must offer you your freedom, for it is not meet a private should lift his eyes to an officer's daughter."

She laughed tremulously.

"It is just like Mr. Railmont never to say one word of his own good deeds; why he spent all that he had to procure your discharge. Oh, Walter, when we are happy together, and that time *will* come, we must never forget his goodness."

Walter was silent under this fresh proof of Railmont's devotion, simply because he *could not* speak, and Ailsa went on,—

"As he has hidden his light under a bushel, it is for me to expose it. When you are well enough there is a clerkship waiting for you—he did wonders to procure it—it is only a subordinate place, but Mr. Railmont says with a reference from the firm you may enter others. It is a new start—a poor one—only twenty-five shillings a week, but 'half a loaf is better than none,' and it is but the stepping-stone to better things."

"Ailsa, *my* Ailsa! Heaven has been very good to me, and with its help I will live down the past, hoping for the day when, my character vindicated, I may, spite of my prison experience, boldly claim you before all who once condemned me. As for Geordie, he is a hero; I shall be a happy man if ever in any measure I can repay his goodness. You and he are friends?"

"I hope so;" and now, for she was ever a cheerful lass, a little twinkle of fun brightened the serious blue eyes, "he told me yesterday that he did not now think *all* women bad; he made an exception in my favour; as women go I am 'very fair.'"

"Poor old Geordie! One day I will tell you his tragic story, but now I can only think of you, and wonder how you could prefer me to Lucian Gore, the prosperous Lucian Gore, the handsome."

"I am afraid it points to mental obliquity," she retorted saucily, "I most certainly must have a very distorted vision," but she kissed him as she spoke.

So soon as Walter was well on the road to recovery, she and Mrs. Marsden left for Lyndhurst, and one of Ailsa's first acts was to write her

father of her doings, asking his forgiveness, and pleading her lover's cause.

On receipt of her letter the Major was distinctly angry; but he was a man of some self-control, and he did not reply at once.

He waited until he could review the matter calmly, then as his heart yearned over his "motherless little girl," he thought,—

"I am in the midst of danger, heaven knows these may be the last lines she ever receives from me, she shall not remember me all her life as angry and unforgiving, and can I upbraid her because her mother's true nature has descended to her?"

So he wrote affectionately, saying only he was sorry necessity had compelled her to disobey him, and imploring her to have patience, because as her heart was set upon Walter Eltringham, on his return—supposing he was so fortunate as to see his native land again—he would re-open the inquiry into Walter's case, and if justice was to be obtained he should have justice.

Meanwhile he withdrew his order with regard to their correspondence, permitting her to write and receive one letter monthly. But before his reply reached her, an event that might have been tragic, occurred at Lyndhurst.

On her return Ailsa noticed that Ethel was much changed—paler, thinner than she should have been, languid and spiritless, she seemed only to delight in solitude. She even avoided the loving ministrations of Jessie as though they hurt her.

Really alarmed, reproaching herself for her absence, Mrs. Marsden called in a medical man to her eldest and favourite daughter.

"There was nothing specific the matter," he said, after much study of the girl; "but she wanted tone. He fancied that the gaieties of the past season had proved too much for her. He should advise her parents to take her abroad."

Ethel, hearing, smiled a trifle scornfully, and when discussing the subject with her mother absolutely refused to leave home.

It chanced a week after Ailsa's return that Lucien Gore called. Jessie, her eyes grown very bright, cried with a sharp note in her voice,—

"Is it really Mr. Gore in the flesh? We have been imagining all sorts of horrible things about you! Do you know it is exactly four weeks since you did us the honour to remember our existence. (It was just four weeks since Ailsa so hurriedly left with Railmont). "We thought you had been gazetted and fled the country, or that you were murdered and hidden away in some queer place."

"Jessie! Jessie!" remonstrated her mother, "you are talking utter nonsense;" but she did not see what Ailsa did.

Jessie was purposely standing before Ethel, whose white face and quivering lips told the tale she would fain have hidden, thus allowing her time to recover her usual manner.

"Miss Jessie is always pleased to exercise her wit upon me," Lucian said, with a sickly smile, "and I am quite afraid that any excuses I might offer for my seeming discourtesy would only call for fresh badinage from her. Miss Marsden, you will be more merciful."

Ethel had risen now, and confronted him with a smile.

"Both Jessie and I took your desertion badly," she said in a brave, clear voice. "With mamma and Ailsa away, we were not only lonely, but dull. You see, everybody else has left Lyndhurst, or the void would not have been so great."

He was regarding her curiously. Her pallor, the sharpened line of cheek and chin told him all the truth; but he felt no pity for her, only he admired the courage which brought her so well through this trial; but he might have spared her the words,—

"You look ill!"

The hot blood flooded her cheeks and throat.

"She *has* been ill for months," Jessie said, sharply; "you must have been blind not to notice what was patent to everybody else. But she is so obstinate she persists in saying 'I am well,' and refusing to go away. Lyndhurst cannot be a very healthy place, for you yourself Mr. Gore look *awful*."

With her bright eyes fixed remorsely on his face he felt distinctly uncomfortable, and Ailsa, who had witnessed all this by-play in silence, felt her heart burn hotly against him.

She had solved the mystery of Ethel's ailment, and so far as was in her nature to hate, she hated Lucian Gore for the cruelty he had practised.

She wondered that Mr. and Mrs. Marsden could be so blind to the truth, and felt that she must cry out to them to spare Ethel further torture when they pressed Lucian to remain to luncheon.

As she ran upstairs she encountered Jessie. Catching impulsively at her hand, she said,—

"Oh, how you must hate me! How much I wish I had never come to spoil *her* peace; but I never guessed that Ethel cared, and you know—oh, you must know that I never gave Lucian Gore a thought—that my heart was always full of Walter—now if by going away I could undo this harm."

"You *must* stay, it is not your fault, Ethel does not blame you. If you went she would die of shame to think her secret was such an open one. No, no, dear Ailsa, stay with us, and let us together teach her to forget. You don't know what this is to me. It would have been hard enough to give her up to a *good* man; but that I could have borne. The bitterest sting of all lies in the fact that Lucian Gore is not worthy to tie her shoestring, and that he does not care the value of a half-penny for her."

It was the evening of the same day, and Ailsa, in a restless mood, wandered in the gardens, dreaming of Walter, and praying for Ethel, whose need she felt was so bitter. She walked to a little wicket gate, leading into a paddock where a couple of goats and an Alderney calf browsed; resting her elbows upon the topmost bar, she fell into a deep reverie, which only the rustling of footsteps in the long grass disturbed. Looking quickly up she saw Lucian Gore before her; his face was white and distorted, his eyes wild, so that she shrank instinctively from him.

"Do not go," he said, advancing rapidly. "I have something to say to you which will not brook delay. Ailsa Macgregor, once I prayed you to be my wife, and you refused me with scorn; to-night I renew my suit—think well before you spurn it! Will you marry me? Yes or no?"

"Your question is an insult to me and a disgrace to yourself. You are and have always been aware that I am betrothed to an honourable man—I have only recently left what might have been his deathbed—oh! how can you play so false and mean a part."

"Yes or no?" he hissed, bringing his dark face close to hers.

"A thousand times, and for ever—*no!*"

With a swift movement he drew a dainty revolver from his breast pocket. She saw and cried aloud with fear—even as he levelled it at her heart, she struck his arm upwards, so that the bullet merely grazed her shoulder, but the shock and fright were so great she fell prone to the ground.

CHAPTER VII.

She lay quite still until the echo of his flying footsteps no more reached her; then, trembling in every limb she rose. The blood was issuing from the slight wound she had received, and stained her white gown; the mere sight of it turned her sick and faint, but resolute to reach the house, to hide the dreadful truth from Ethel, she made her way through the gardens as best she could. Half-way through them she met Jessie, who exclaimed on seeing her:

"Oh, Ailsa, what has happened? I heard a report—I dared not guess what it meant—*Ailsa!*" as she came nearer and saw the bloodstains on the white gown, "*You are wounded!*"

"Hush, get me to the house as quickly as you can, and do not let any gossip reach Ethel; she has enough to bear—it was Lucian Gore who did this—because I would not marry him. Hurry! I am more frightened than hurt—but——"

"Don't say another word; husband your strength," and slipping a strong arm about Ailsa's slender form Jessie half-led, half-carried her into the house, so contriving that they met no one on their way.

But once in her room Ailsa fell into a swoon so prolonged that Jessie became alarmed, and hurried in search of her parents to whom she broke the news, not sparing Lucian in the least, and now, seeing some gleam of compassion in her father's eyes, she threw every other consideration to the wind, and told how shamefully he had ill-treated Ethel.

"Don't let her even suspect you know," she said, hurrying her mother upstairs to Ailsa's room; "one day, perhaps, she will tell you herself."

The mother peeped in at her unhappy daughter as she passed her chamber, but she was sleeping quietly after long grief and pain, so Mrs. Marsden passed into Ailsa's presence. During Jessie's absence she had recovered consciousness, and as her kind hostess advanced, she smiled, reassuringly, but the lady cried,—

"Oh, my dear, my dear, this is terrible! What will your father say and think of our care for you? But for Providence you might now be dead. Jessie, dear, send someone for Dr. Phillimore."

"No, no, I pray and entreat you no," interrupted Ailsa, "it is a mere scratch; if you will be kind enough to bathe and bandage it for me, no one save ourselves need be any the wiser. We will have no scandal, that would be so painful to you all; but I promise never to wander at large alone."

"But Ailsa," said Mrs. Marsden, loving the girl for her tender thought and patient ignoring of her own sufferings, "if fever should supervene and harm chance to you, what happiness could I ever know again?"

"I won't ask you to feel my pulse just now," smiled Ailsa, "because it is not quite in its normal condition, but to-morrow I shall be myself again except for a little soreness here," touching her shoulder lightly; and submitting to her will they followed her directions with regard to the dressing of the wound. "It is all very simple you see," she remarked, when they wondered over her surgical knowledge, "often at Lachlan, when the shooting was on, there would be accidents, and I used to help daddy to dress the wounds."

She said it all so simply, so naturally, that Mrs. Marsden kissed her again.

"My dear, if Heaven had seen fit to give me a son I could have wished no sweeter wife for him than Ailsa Macgregor."

"That iss fery good of you to say so; it iss a proud girl you make of me," said Ailsa, much moved; and when, contrary to their inclinations, but obedient to her wishes they left her, she tried to sleep, but the "mere scratch" was too painful to allow of rest, and she was glad when the morning dawned. In a very loose wrapper she appeared at breakfast, paler than usual it is true, but otherwise apparently no worse for her adventure.

Ethel had not yet come down, and Mr. Marsden took occasion to say.

"My dear child, Mrs. Marsden and I have been talking matters over, and have decided that Lucian Gore should suffer for his dastardly attempt upon your life. Not even for Ethel's sake can he be spared—perhaps, when she learns what manner of man he is, she may have strength to uproot her most unfortunate attachment."

"Love cannot be so easily disposed of," said Ailsa; "and, as I only am a sufferer through Mr. Gore's violence, I hope you will let this matter remain quite secret." Her voice died suddenly out, for at that moment Ethel entered. Glancing with some suspicion at the quartette (because their sudden silence was unaccountable), she took her usual seat.

It was then that Rogers, the solemn butler, entered; his face looked more like an owl's than ever, so wide were the round eyes, so great the amazement on his usually wooden features.

"Well, Rogers," cried Mr. Marsden, glad to be quit of an unpleasant subject, if even for a little while, "what news, if any, this morning?"

"Oh, sir, dreadful, dreadful! The whole

place is ringing with it. Mr. Lucian Gore has attempted suicide!"

"Oh, great Heaven!" The cry broke from Ethel, who had attempted to rise, but Jessie, laying a firm hand upon her arm, forced her back into her seat, and Rogers went on,—

"Yes, it's quite true, miss; no one knows why, because he isn't in money troubles, or anything of that sort, but last night he rushed into the house like a madman, and up to his room. Then the servants heard two shots fired in quick succession, and ran to him. They found him badly wounded in the chest, and sent at once for Doctor Phillimore. They say it isn't likely he will recover; it's a sad pity, miss and sir."

"*A sad pity!*" echoed Ethel, as the man left the room in obedience to his master's signal, "*a sad pity!*" and walking to the window she stood an instant looking out. Then, all of a sudden, she flung up her arms crying, "Lucian, Lucian!" and fell senseless on her father's breast.

When she recovered consciousness she was alone with her parents, and acting on Mr. Marsden's instructions, her mother told her all the terrible truth, hoping thus to kill her most unhappy love. But the poor girl, turning wearily upon the couch, only murmured,—

"Ailsa has been most good—most good! I will thank her when I am better able; but, don't you see, he was mad? In his everyday mood he would not even harm a fly."

"Though he would not scruple to break a good girl's heart!" growled out Mr. Marsden. "Ethel, my girl, you must learn to forget him."

She made no reply, but her mother read aright the expression of her face, and cried in her wrung heart,—

"Oh, Heaven! what has my darling done to deserve so cruel a fate?"

Fain would Ethel have gone to Lucian, but maidenly pride forbade this, and her parents were angered by the mere mention of his name.

Still she was able to obtain tidings of him. She heard that Doctor Phillimore had most cleverly extracted the bullet, but the patient was still in extreme danger; at that she neither cried out nor wept, but Ailsa's heart bled for her as she saw the change love and grief had wrought in this once bonny girl.

Later, she learned that Lucian was sufficiently recovered to stand his trial for attempted suicide; and a merciful jury discharged him on the ground of temporary insanity.

He had travelled much, and in India had suffered from sunstroke; his counsel made the most of these points, so he was permitted to return to Riversmead, from whence he contrived to have a note conveyed secretly to Ethel. In it he deplored his conduct towards herself, regretted his mad infatuation, and prayed her to go to him in his hour of need.

She had but one thought, and that was of his loneliness, but one longing, and that was to comfort him.

For the first time in her life she wilfully deceived her friends; dressing hastily, she went to the place he had appointed for their tryst. When she saw him she forgot everything but her love, being touched to the soul by the terrible change in him. Gaunt, hollow-eyed, looking years older than when last they met, and leaning upon a stick for support, he bore little resemblance to the man who had wantonly thrown her love back upon her; and, although she did not then guess it, the shadow of death was already overhanging him.

"You did not expect to see such a wreck," he said in a low and humble tone, "you have been thinking of me *as I was*. I wonder if your love can stand such a test as I have put it to."

For answer she gave him her hand, her deep eyes glowing with her pure and steady devotion, answered for her, before her tremulous lips could frame a word. He understood, and said in a shaken voice,—

"I have behaved shamefully all through, but most of all to you, Ethel; I can never make sufficient atonement for the wrong, but—but dear, if now you would give yourself to me, you never should regret it. I am bowed down with misery and loneliness, I am not a fit husband for you, and I cannot even give you the best love of my heart—but gratitude, reverence, affection; and, if Heaven is merciful, who knows but love may grow from these. I am well aware that your people are against me."

Then she cried out in bitter pain "If I come to you I lose *them*."

"I should not complain," he answered reproachfully, "but at least I relied upon your truth. Well, it matters little what becomes of me. I have been so near to death, that I hardly dread the end. Good-bye, Ethel, I never was worthy you," and he turned as if to go, when she, full of passionate pain, and a love that could not be stifled, cried out "Lucian, I cannot let you go."

He turned and caught her in his arms.

"You mean that you will cast in your lot with me, that you will give yourself to me so soon as matters can be arranged; you are of age. You may please yourself. Ethel, there need be very little delay," and, what other arguments he brought to bear upon her matters nothing, because, from the first, his success was certain. She pleaded that at least he would ask her father's consent; he agreed, knowing well what the answer would be, but he was so relieved to find that out of all his friends, Ethel remained to him, that he conceded so much to her wishes.

Mr. Marsden's refusal was not only decided but somewhat discourteous; reading it, Lucian smiled very grimly yet with a certain expression of triumph in his eyes. Two days later Ethel left home secretly, being joined at Liverpool street by Lucian; when they returned at night they were man and wife. It was Ethel, herself, who announced the tidings to the home people, and the fury on her father's face frightened her.

"Out of the house," he cried, "you have chosen to link yourself to a would-be murderer and suicide. You are no longer a child of mine. I curse the hour of your birth. I curse——"

"*No!*" cried Ailsa springing forward, and laying her little white hand upon his mouth, "you shall not say what you will be sorry for all your life. Ethel dear, he does not mean it."

But Ethel was sobbing like a mad creature in her sister's arms, whilst the poor mother moaned "How could you do it? How could you do it? Oh, I am afraid for you; but father, father, she is our own child, and it should not be so very hard to forgive her."

"Out of my sight" he answered, savagely, "this is no longer your home," and without a word Ethel went away weeping. Truly her bridal day had little of joy or comfort in it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Kartoum had fallen; Gordon was no more, thanks to a procrastinating government; and Major Macgregor was invalided home.

It was in March that he arrived, and his medical adviser declaring the air of Lachlan too keen for one in his weak state, he had been glad to accept Mr. Marsden's very cordial invite to Lyndhurst.

The old home was not the joyous place it used to be, for one of the birds had flown; and though she often returned, yet things were not the same.

Between Riversmead and The Lodge there was peace, for who could cherish anger against a dying man, or wage war with the white-faced young wife, who knew only too well how short was the space allotted her husband.

Even Jessie had forgiven Lucian, and he now liked to see her enter his sick-room, saying that her visits were better than medicine, as invigorating as fresh air.

Many a long talk did Ailsa and her father hold concerning Walter, but the girl's faith was not to be shaken, and even though the Major frequently quoted Ethel's disobedience, "To point a moral and adorn his tale," she would say,—

"The cases are very different in all respects, and, daddy dear, I have promised never to marry without your consent; I can do no more; only this I know, if a cruel fate keeps Walter and I for ever apart, that I shall die Ailsa Macgregor."

He hated to hurt his motherless little girl, his love for her was so intense, and after awhile he forebore to remonstrate or entreat with her on the score of her "most unfortunate attachment."

He was a man of pure and blameless life, of strong religious tendencies, and now he left it all to providence, feeling that Ailsa would not be left uncared for, unguarded.

In town Geordie Railmont and Walter were living their homely lives together; in the evening the young man added a little to his slender income by writing bright articles descriptive of places he had visited in earlier and happier days.

These Geordie always carefully revised, saying, with a grim smile,—

"You're a novice yet, my lad, and needna be above taking a wee bit of advice from one nigh old enough to be your father."

Once—so eager was he to add to his little store—Walter suggested he should write an account of his prison experiences; but Geordie, with a scowl cried in broadest dialect,—

"Hoot, mon! wad ye disgrace yourself? And it iss the market that's glutted wi' such trash. Convicts and detectives are the rage noo. Unhealthy reading is poisoning the minds o' the lads and lasses. Dinna ye ken what ye're aboot that ye would prostitute your leetle talent in such a fashion."

So the project was abandoned, much to Railmont's relief.

It was a wet and cold evening in early April; a bright fire burned in the grate of the little sitting-room—for now that Walter added his mite to the housekeeping, his friend had insisted upon renting two apartments, as "being handier should visitors come."

"It's no use, Geordie," Walter was saying, "I can't work to-night; there is something in the air. You'll laugh at me, I know, though you should not, being a Scotchman, and all Scotchmen are more or less superstitious. I feel as though before another day dawns, something of moment will happen to me."

"Pre-cisely. That cheque will arrive from The Courier, and to-morrow, we shall take a trip down the seelver Thames."

Walter laughed.

"What a mercenary brute you are. Railmont, what was that? I could swear I heard a woman's cry outside the door."

"Then something of moment *has* happened, though I never knew before you had the proprietorship of a Banshee; I never even suspected that you were Irish—are you? *Great Heavens*, lad, you're right," and rushing to the door he flung it wide open.

At first in the darkness he could see nothing, and he bade Walter bring a light.

By its fitful gleam they discerned the figure of a woman, lying face downwards on the landing; her bonnet had fallen off; and her long light hair streamed in heavy waves over her shoulders, below her waist.

Stooping, Walter said,—

"Are you ill? Is there anything we can do for you?" but Geordie Railmont in a hoarse voice questioned,—

"Who are you? let me see your face."

"I am your wife," moaned the woman, "kill me if you will, but in Heaven's name let me speak first wi' thee—ah!" as he all but spurned her with his foot. "I deserve thee should do evil to me for I workit harm enow to thee—but Geordie! Geordie! I haf suffered ay as mooch as I sinned. Let me in—I am a-cold—I will tell thee my tale an' go awa', 'tis not meet I should linger near t' thee."

Roughly he lifted her to her feet, and Walter saw a woman, much younger than Railmont; she had once been beautiful, but her beauty was faded now, and her face bore the impress of want and woe.

"'Tis thou—*at last!*" Geordie was muttering, "now what shall be done to thee! Oh woman, 'tis not alone my life that's wrecked, but my immortal soul, and by thee! Shall I slay thee?" and he lifted his fist threateningly—but Walter caught and held his arm.

"She is a woman—do not play the coward, Railmont," and Geordie's arm fell slackly by his side as he muttered,—

"Come in, say what you have to say and get you gone," she crept in behind them.

In mercy Walter placed a chair for her, she

sank into it with a deep sob, then she asked,—

"May I not see thee alone, Geordie? Who is this young gentleman?"

"My friend; he knows all our story: you may safely speak before Mr. Walter Eltringham."

"*Walter Eltringham!*" she echoed, starting to her feet, "it is well! now I can right twa wrangs at once; let him stay. Geordie, wadst thee ken wha made me false wife to thee; wha it wass that dragged thee doon, that wrecked thy life an' brought me to meesery an' want?"

"Ay, ay," answered Geordie, the sullen fires burning in his deep set eyes, "for then if he be above the ground I'll slay him."

"Wilt thou?" her face flushing, her eyes glittering with the thirst of blood, "thee wilt do so mooch for me yet—then tak the traitor's name—Aleck Mostyn, son to auld Mostyn, wha sent Walter Eltringham to preeson."

Geordie started to his feet with a terrible oath; but his wife cried out,—

"Sit thee doon mon an' listen, there's more an' waur to hear. I wass niver a fit wife for thee, an' I niver held ye dear, but I hadna been an evil woman but for Aleck Mostyn. If he hadna left me alane an' to live or dee as I could, I hadna searchit for thee; I wass afeard. 'Twas when first he begun to gie me grand presents, that he stole his father's siller; but he wassna found oot for lang; because he wass that lucky wi' the cards an' horses.

"But an ill day wass in store for him; he backit the wrang animal, an' he couldna pit back the siller he'd stole. Then questions wass asked, an' he didna ken hoo to git oot o' the muddle—in the morn afore Walter Eltringham wass took, Aleck was alane in t' office, an' maybe he thought 'In for a penny in for a pound,' for he managed to lay his honds on a fair sum.

"Shortly after, auld Mostyn called him into his own office, an' telt him he'd put marked money where 'twass easy got at—that frighted him sore; an' when his faither missed it—he hasted back to where his desk stood by young Eltringham's, an' droppit the cash in't."

"*The Devil!*" shouted Geordie, springing to his feet; but Walter sat like one stunned, only murmuring again and again to himself,—

"Free! Free! Thank Heaven, I can go to Ailsa now."

He was startled into action by Maggie Railmont's cry, and then he saw that Geordie had her fast in his grasp and his eyes were murderous as he said,—

"So it was for such a coward and fiend that ye dowered yourself with shame, and made a bye-word of me amang men. Surely it were no sin to slay ye."

"Oh, ha' mercy Geordie; ha' mercy; thee wast niver a hard mon, an' I've much to tell thee yet."

"Say on," almost hurling her away, "but make short work o' your tale, and then 'twill be time to consider what to do wi' ye."

Briefly, the remainder of her story ran thus: "when she left her home with Alick he took a house in a village three miles from Edinburgh, and for a while all the mean desires of her sordid soul were gratified; but as she had ruined Geordie by her extravagance, so she brought the partner of her crime to the same pass. When he first abstracted moneys from the firm—always, until that fatal time, escaping discovery by restoring them before their loss could be detected. Then, in a fit of despair, determined to save himself at any cost, he conceived the diabolical plot of making Walter suffer in his stead; and, as the reader knows, he succeeded only too well. But conscience would not let him rest; he fell ill, and fearing death was near, made confession to his mistress; promising, should he recover, to make restitution.

He did recover, but forgot his vow; more than this, the wicked love he had so long nourished was converted into hate, and as callously as Maggie deserted Railmont, so he deserted her. Then, when but recently she had learned he was about to marry, she cast about for her revenge.

"Now, what was to be done?" was the question Geordie asked of Walter.

"I am going at once to Edinburgh to interview Mr. Mostyn; I shall need some corroboration of my story; will you go with me?" turning to Maggie, "are you willing to repeat what you have said?"

"'Tis not a question of her willingness," Geordie said, savagely, "'tis the only recompense she can make—we will go together."

"If Mr. Eltringham will vow not to leave me alane with thee, for I fear thee," said the woman; and to this Walter agreed.

Then he brought out refreshments for her, because she seemed faint for want of food, and the journey before them was a long one.

* * * * *

It was all true, and double disgrace had befallen the house of Mostyn; for the first time, the old merchant learned the dual life his eldest son and pride had been leading; the story of his sin against Walter must be made known through the length and breadth of the land. He, the old man, could never hold up his head in the street or at kirk again.

"Justice shall be done you, lad," he said in a quavering voice, "I was over harsh with you, even had you been guilty, and Heaven has seen fit to punish me. Give me until to-morrow; it is not asking much grace, at most a few hours," and in his joy in so clearly and easily proving his innocence, Walter could not be hard with the old man. Once outside the house, he linked his hand in Railmont's arm, saying, "let us be looking for a place where we can lodge for the night, though I think sleep will not come readily to me, I am too excited."

"If you go to Mrs. Macdonald's, St. Andrew's street, you'll be comfortable enough," answered Railmont; then to his wife, who was dragging behind, "Here woman, take that for which ye sold your soul—'tis the last bit o' gold o' mine that ever you'll see," and he thrust a handful of money into her ready palm. "Let it help ye to a better life; and now gang your own gait as I'll gang mine, and may Heaven forgive ye, for I never can."

He muttered some unintelligible words, and turned away; never again did Walter Eltringham see her, and no word of her fate ever reached him. Geordie stood looking after her awhile, then with a groan he turned to his companion.

"She was a good lass once, and I loved her well. Leave me to myself noo, my lad, I canna rest the night," and by his relapse into the old tongue, much more than by the tone of his voice, Walter knew he was shaken to the soul.

"Heaven be wi' ye lad," and then he too plunged into the darkness.

* * * * *

When morning dawned, below the rugged hill outside the city, two men were found locked in each other's arms; evidently they had wrestled together, and in wrestling fallen, and so met the death one at least longed for. They were identified as Aleck Mostyn and Geordie Railmont; the latter suspecting that the old man would send his son away secretly, had watched the house until he saw him issue stealthily from it. He had then followed cautiously, and coming up with him had challenged him to fight until one cried for mercy; in the struggle he went ever nearer and nearer the verge of the precipice, until with one mighty struggle he flung both himself and his antagonist over the brink.

That was the end of Geordie Railmont, and Walter mourned him as a brother, forgetting his follies and sins, remembering only his gratitude and devotion to one who had rendered him but a small service.

* * * * *

After the funeral, Walter wrote a lengthy letter to Major Macgregor, giving him the whole story, which, indeed, was now public property; he added, too, that by way of recompense for all he had suffered, Mr. Mostyn had presented him with the snug sum of two thousand pounds, besides giving him a responsible place in the office. He therefore hoped and prayed Major Macgregor would place no further obstacles in the way of his marriage with Ailsa.

The soldier's answer was brief and cordial.

"MY DEAR BOY,—

"Come at once to us; and when you remember you are taking my best treasure from me, you will forgive the doubts I entertained of you. Ailsa is waiting you.

"Affectionately yours,

"ANGUS MACGREGOR."

* * * * * *

"Oh, love! dear love! this hour atones for all the bitterness of the past; look up Ailsa, my darling, it is so long since I saw your face! How shall I thank you for all your loyalty, your adherence to me when all the world was against me?"

"By loving me just as well all through my life as now you do," whispered back the girl, as she lifted her face to receive his rapturous kiss.

* * * * * *

Walter Eltringham is now junior partner in the firm of Mostyn, Gregg, and Eltringham, and a happier household than his it would be difficult to imagine. The Major has his home with them, and does his best to spoil the little ones.

Jessie Marsden, too, is happily married, but at The Lodge a gentle, sad-faced widow is her parents' sole companion, and she will never leave them, for Ethel Gore's heart lies buried in the grave of the man who never gave her aught beyond esteem and gratitude.

[THE END.]

A CURIOUS fish is found in the rivers of Guiana and Surinam. It is called the anablet, and has in each eye two pupils, an upper and a lower one. When the fish is swimming, it keeps the upper optic, which protrudes above the head, out of the water.

THE Canary Islands possess not only the most wonderful climate, but an extremely fertile soil. The only difficulty in agriculture is the want of water. It has lately been found that there are great quantities of water in cavities of the mountains of Teneriffe. An English company has undertaken to get it out. They find that boring to a depth of a hundred feet is enough to procure a large supply of water. If they succeed in getting an unlimited supply in this way, the Islands, which have declined in prosperity in recent years, will probably develop greater productivity than hitherto.

THIRTEEN miles from Cooke, on the Rosebud, is a grand and imposing glacier at least one hundred and fifty feet high. Upon its glistening surface the bright sun looks down, as it has for ages, and in no way affects this icy mirror below. Here and there are immense cracks or fissures where the awe-stricken adventurer can look down into unknown depths. The strangest part of the glacier is that all over its surface in vast multitudes, and particularly near its base, lie great grasshoppers in a perfect state of preservation: at the base they are heaped up in windrows, and present a curious spectacle. There is field for much speculation and room for wonder and admiration as we stand and view this vast glacier and its burden of grasshoppers.

IF it were possible to rise above the atmosphere which surrounds the earth, the sun would appear as a sharply defined ball of fire, while everything else would be wrapped in total darkness. The explanation of this seeming oddity is this: There would not nor could not be any sensation of light conveyed to the brain through the medium of the eyes without an atmosphere or something similar to the sun's rays to act upon. But, on the contrary, if the atmosphere of our earth extended to a height of seven hundred miles, the sun's heat and rays could never penetrate it, and nothing in the shape of an organized being would ever have existed upon this planet. Again, if something should happen that should suddenly expand our atmosphere to a height of six hundred or seven hundred miles, we would all freeze to death while wrapped in darkness blacker than the blackest midnight.

FACETIÆ.

GUARD: "Schwxyzmixton!" Passenger: "What station did you say?" Guard (angrily): "Schwxyzmixton." Passenger: "Thanks."

WINKS: "What are you carrying that boat horn around for?" Jinks: "That's to blow when I want bicyclists to get out of my way."

"I FAIL," said the boarder, frantically sawing at the steak, "to find a weak point in this armour-plate."

"UNION is not always strength," as the sailor said when he saw the purser mixing his rum with water.

JUSTICE O'HALLORAN: "Have you any children, Mrs. Kelly?" Mrs. Kelly: "I have two living an' one married."

"WHY do you always refer to your valet as your 'retainer'?" "Because he always keeps everything he finds."

PRISCILLA: "A girl never marries her first love." Prunella: "No; she's lucky, indeed, if she can marry her twenty-first, nowadays."

JABBER: "This rich relative of yours—is he a distant relative?" Grabber: "Yes, extremely distant since he became rich."

HE: "Her heart is as hard as glass, I can't make any impression on it." She: "Try a diamond, it fetches glass every time."

LADY: "How is this insect powder to be applied?" Assistant (absent-minded): "Give 'em a teaspoonful after each meal, madam."

BRIDE OF A YEAR (weeping): "You used to say I was sweet enough to eat." Groom of the same period: "Yes, and I wish to heaven I had eaten you."

EVA: "I hear you won your breach of promise suit. Did you get the whole ten thousand?" Delia: "Every halfpenny. I married my lawyer."

MRS SPENDIT: "Why did you go and sell the yacht?—and just as I've got my new yachting gowns here, too!" Spendit: "Well, you see, I couldn't afford both!"

FOOTLIGHTS: "Our company produced your play last night." Scribbler (in ecstasy): "Did the audience call for the author?" Footlights: "Yes. They knew we were not to blame."

FIRST TRADESMAN'S BOY: "Time to move, ain't it, and deliver our messages?" Second Tradesman's Boy: "All right. I'm tired of sittin' down, too."

PARKER: "What is your opinion of Brown's veracity?" Barker: "Well, Brown could tell a sea-serpent story without seriously affecting his reputation."

YOUNGSTER (gleefully): "Papa, here I have found a cycling cap!" "What are you going to do with it, my lad?" "Ah, papa, do get me a bicycle to match it!"

SERVANT: "Yis, sorr, Mrs. Jones is in. What's yer name, sorr?" Visitor: "Professor Vandersplinkenheimer." Servant: "Oh, sure ye'd better go right in an' take it wid ye!"

PATIENT: "I am troubled with insomnia. What would you recommend?" Doctor: "A good refreshing sleep seven nights a week. Five shillings, please!"

MAMMA: "I haven't seen the kitten to-day. Where is she?" Little Dot: "I don't know, but I put a blue ribbon round her neck this morning, and I s'pose she's out showin' herself."

"I AM so glad your sister enjoyed her visit to us, Mr. Smith." Mr. Smith: "Oh, well, she is the sort of girl who can enjoy herself almost anywhere, you know."

WOOL: "How do you like your new flat?" Pelt: "All right, except that the man across the hall is learning to play the flute." Wool: "You ought to get an accordion." Pelt: "I did. That's why he got the flute."

"DOCTOR, they tell me you are attending that young man next door free of charge." "Yes, and glad to do it. He's been practising on a fiddle for the last six months, and now I have a chance to put an end to the nuisance."

DOWNER: "I am glad it is good form not to wear a watch with a dress suit." Upper: "Why?" Downer: "Because I never have my watch and my dress suit at the same time."

WHEN you see a girl pasting a scrap-book full of cooking recipes of the newspapers you know pretty well that some young man is in a position to be congratulated, and yet, when you think of the recipes, you feel rather sorry for him, too.

"I AM TOLD," said the caller, "that your husband is engaged in a work of profane history." "Yes," replied the author's wife. "It certainly sounded that way when I heard him correcting the proofs."

FRIEND: "How did the count propose to you, and you accept, if he could not understand your language nor you his?" American Heiress: "It was very simple. He showed me his family tree and I showed him my bank-book."

"OH, my tooth aches just dreadfully!" she exclaimed. "I don't see why we could not be born without teeth." "I think, my dear, that if you will look up some authority on that point, you will find that most of us are."

"OH, dear," sighed a little girl, "I am so tired of lessons. I know what I'll do when I grow up." "What?" "I'll be a teacher." "But teachers have to study, too." "I know that. But it's so much easier to learn the questions than it is to learn the answers."

"GREAT SCOTT! What are they applauding that fellow for? He's got a voice like a saw-mill and he sings out of the side of his mouth." "Sh! They're trying to keep him on the platform till the boy they've sent after the cabbages and tin horns comes back."

FAIR RIDER (to Augustin, who has just "taken a header" from his horse in trying to jump the fence): "I hope you're not much hurt, Mr. Gosling?" Gussie (bravely): "Not at all; pardon my haste in alighting to open this gate for you."

MOTHER: "Jane, you must choose between the two. Will you marry the man who loves you, or the man who can dress you?" Daughter: "Mamma, as an up-to-date girl, I must reply that, although love is a very desirable thing, clothes are an absolute necessity."

HE: "You know, my angel, it will have to be a case of love in a cottage." She: "That will be just heavenly. Where is the cottage?" He: "Um—I haven't got the cottage yet. You see, I am saving up money for a bicycle first; much cheaper than a horse, you know."

"CHARLES, my cigar boxes have emptied themselves with uncommon rapidity during the last month. Is it possible that during the short period you have been in my service——" "No fear, sir, I have still in my possession three boxes of my late employer's."

"I'VE never been to sea," said Mr. Swyzzlbo, "and so I've never seen 'em shorten sail in a storm at sea, but I think I can form a pretty good idea of how it's done, for I live in a flat, and I've seen the people take in their washing on wash days when a shower came up."

THE duke was making the girl dead tired by his long and vapid talk on the advancement of women. "Don't you ever wish you were a man?" he asked, as a kind of clincher. "No," she responded, in the sweetest, most womanly way. "Do you?"

WIFE: "You seem to find something very interesting in that paper. What are you reading?" Husband: "'The Woman's Page.'" "Well, I am glad you have at last awakened to the vast importance of woman's place in civilization." "Yes, indeed. I've struck some mighty fine cooking receipts."

A SCOTCH mason and an Irish labourer often met in the early morning, going opposite ways to their work. Pat was always the first to hail his fellow-workman with, "The top ov the morning to you, me bhoy!" leaving Sandy a very lame reply or a nod. Thinking to be upsides with Pat, Sandy one morning took the first word, and shouted out, "The top of the morning to you, Pat!" "Och, sure," said Pat, "the rest of the day to yourself, me bhoy!"

AFTER instructing his men in the points of the compass, Lieutenant X. says to one of them, "You have in front of you the north, on your right the east, on your left the west. What have you behind you?" Private B. (after a few moments' reflection): "My knapsack, lieutenant"

JUDGE (austerely): "Prisoner, how did you have the audacity to break into this man's house at midnight and rob him?" Prisoner (piteously): "But, my lord, last time I was before you, you wanted to know how I could have the audacity to rob a man on the highway at high noon. When do you want me to get in my work?"

A CALLER had mentioned that a neighbour had been obliged to shoot his dog because it had grown old and cross. After he had gone, little Edith, who had been very quiet since the dog had been spoken of, surprised her mother by asking, "Mamma, when do you think papa will shoot Aunt Sarah?"

MR. DE STYLE: "Well, are all your arrangements for a summer at the fashionable resorts completed?" Mrs. De Style: "Nearly, but I'm in such a quandary. I have arranged to send our house plants to a florist, our cat to a cat's home, and our dog to a canine boarding-house, so that all will be well cared for until fall; but what in the world shall I do with the baby?"

THE small boy was at a table where his mother was not near to take care of him, and a lady next to him volunteered her services. "Let me cut your steak for you," she said, "if I can cut it in the way you like it," she added, with some degree of doubt. "Thank you," he responded, accepting her courtesy; "I shall like it the way you cut it, even if you do not cut it the way I like it." And the lady actually reached over and kissed him.

MR. PENNE-HECKER: "What! going to leave, John? Why, man, what is your grievance?" John: "Hi can't stand the missus's ways hany longer, sir!" Mr. Penne-Hecker (sadly): "But just consider, John, how long I've put up with them." John: "Yes, sir, quite true, sir. But harskin' your parding, sir—if Hi might be so bold, sir—hit's my hopinion as 'ow you ain't hexactly a free hagint, sir."

BOBBIE: "Mamma, suppose some day I should be sailing on the ocean in a ship and an awful big storm should come on, and the ship should be turned over, and then I should be upset right out in the water with just nothing to hold on to. Wouldn't that be terrible?" Bobbie's Mother: "Yes, Bobbie; it would indeed." Bobbie (earnestly): "Then don't you think I might go down to the river with Willie Smith, and learn to swim?"

VISITOR: "You must have a remarkably efficient board of health in this town." Shrewd Native (one of many): "You are right about that, I can tell you." "Composed of scientists, I presume?" "No, sir. Scientists are too theoretical." "Physicians, perhaps?" "Not much. We don't allow doctors on our board of health — no, sir — nor undertakers, either." "Hum! What sort of men have you chosen then?" "Life insurance agents."

BESS is one of those astute juvenile autocrats who are strangely gifted in analyzing the secret and extent of their dominion over adoring relatives. "Oh, no," she was one day overheard to confide to another small girl, "grandma can't make me mind at all—she can't do a thing with me, but grandpa knows how to manage me." "How does he do it, Bess?" asked the impatient male cousin who was eavesdropping in a hammock on the piazza. "Why, he waits till he sees what I'm going to do, and then he tells me to do it."

IN some private theatricals in India a fugitive from justice was supposed to escape from his pursuers by concealing himself under a table. The table was small, while the fugitive was somewhat lengthy. The commander of the pursuing party rushed on the stage, and fell over the legs of the man he was searching for. Picking himself up and ludicrously rubbing his shins, he caused roars of laughter by exclaiming in true dramatic style, "Ha! the villain has eluded us again!"

SOCIETY.

The Prince of Wales has presented his son-in-law, the Duke of Fife, with a turret clock which has just been fitted up at New Mar Lodge on the north-east side of the house, in "memory of many pleasant visits to Mar."

Prince Bismarck is the possessor of four hundred and eighty-two crosses and decorations. These, placed side by side, cover a space of twenty-one feet by several inches deep.

Bracelets are becoming the fashion for leading Europeans. The Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh-Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and Kaiser Wilhelm are prominent among the notables whose arms are encircled with bracelets.

The Maharajah of Kooch-Behar has rented Blackcraig Castle, Perthshire, for the shooting season. Blackcraig is the fine place in Strathardie where Mr. Armitead entertained Mr. Gladstone for several weeks last year. The scenery all round is very fine, but there is not much shooting of any kind.

The Queen had sanctioned the engagement of Prince Adolphus of Teck and Lady Margaret Grosvenor some time before the match was announced, and the secret had been very well kept. The wedding of Prince Adolphus of Teck to Lady Margaret Grosvenor is to take place in the private chapel at Eaton, it is understood, early in December.

The marriage of the Czarevitch to Princess Alix will not now take place, it is believed, before January, when it is expected that the Prince and Princess of Wales with their daughters, as well as other members of our Royal family, will go to St. Petersburg to be present at it, as the Queen is particularly anxious that the bride's family shall be well represented, and that her much-loved granddaughter may have several of her relatives with her on so important an occasion.

The Queen of Corea is an unusually clever woman, and although, in accordance with Corean customs, no man has ever looked upon her face save her brothers, sons, and husband, she has had great influence over the destinies of her country. She often attends conferences between His Majesty and the Ministers, it is said, although, of course, she does not appear in the room. But she has had several holes cut through the thin paper-like partition separating her apartment from the audience chamber, and through these she makes her comments. Some who pretend to know say that she is the real ruler of Corea.

In China it is rare indeed to meet with an old maid, and an old bachelor is looked upon as quite a vicious and inexcusable person, and girls marry so young that many of them are grandmothers before they are thirty. In spite of this, divorce is almost a thing unknown, and the upper classes, in particular, of Chinese society, look upon it with distaste and even contempt. Women, indeed, of the better class, in Far Cathay, have anything but the bad time of it which many Westerners suppose, and they are, as a rule, so happy in their home-life that they are well content to leave to men the conflict of political life and the stress and worry of business affairs and even of social ambition.

There is now exhibited at a celebrated fan-maker's in Paris the fan made for the Grand Duchess Xenia of Russia, but only a few privileged ones are admitted into the *salon* where this wonder is stretched out for their admiration. It is made of pure cream vellum, and it required weeks to choose the sheet from among thousands of specimens. The painting is a marvel of delicacy in its design and softness in colouring; the Pompadour subject being, as seen through a cloudy mist, of the palest tints of aurora. This masterpiece is supported in a large mount of mother-of-pearl, carved and worked open to the transparency of lace, one of the side branches being enriched by long initials formed by a combination of many-coloured precious stones, and the other bearing the arms of Russia designed in numberless small but perfect diamonds.

STATISTICS.

Warders in prisons are on duty from 70 to 90 hours per week.

It takes a Danish express train a day to travel a hundred miles.

In some London hotels the waiters receive as much as £500 a year in tips.

Over 1,000,000 pawntickets for sums under ten shillings are issued weekly in London alone.

GEMS.

Self-Denial is indispensable to a strong character.

The utmost reach of reason is to recognize what an infinity of things go beyond it.

There are many wrong ways in doing a right thing, but there is no right way in doing a wrong thing.

Genius is common sense intensified—common sense is the gift of Heaven; enough of it is genius.

There is no fit search after truth which does not, first of all, begin to live the truth which it knows.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

Prune Pudding.—One pound stewed prunes, whites of four eggs, one cup of sugar. After the prunes are stewed drain off the juice, remove the stones and chop. Beat the eggs very stiff, add the sugar, gradually beating all the time, then stir in the chopped prunes. Bake twenty minutes. Serve cold with whipped cream flavoured with wine.

Pineapples Canned.—Slice, peel, and cut into small pieces. Allow three quarters of a pound of granulated sugar and one pint of water to two pounds of pineapple. Boil together about ten minutes, put into heated jars, fill to overflowing, and seal as quickly as possible. Pineapples weighing about four pounds, make about two pounds of fruit when peeled.

Fruit Cake.—One teacup of butter, two teacups of fine sugar, three teacups of flour, half teacup cornflour, one teacup of milk, two teaspoons baking powder, four eggs, half pound sultanas, quarter pound peel or cherries. Put butter and sugar in a basin and beat them together well, then add the eggs very well beaten, then the flour, then the milk, then the cornflour, then the baking powder, then the fruit, all prepared. Everything must be beaten a few minutes after it is added.

Fricassed Lobster.—Put the meat of two lobsters, cut into small pieces, with the fat and some coral in a frying-pan with a little pepper, salt, one half cupful of milk or cream, one cup water, butter size of an egg, and one teaspoonful Worcestershire sauce. Let simmer until liquid has a rich red colour. Take a tablespoonful flour, rub into it one half tablespoonful of butter stir this into one half cup of hot milk, then add the beaten yolk of one egg. When ready to serve stir this into the lobster and add one tablespoonful of sherry wine.

Blackberry Roly-Poly.—One quart of blackberries, two cups of milk, four cups of flour, two tablespoonfuls of butter, two heaping teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and one half teaspoonful of salt. Make a crust and roll it out about a quarter of an inch thick. Make the sheet about three times as long as it is wide. Spread on the fruit and sprinkle it with sugar; roll up the dough like a music roll, pinch the ends together, and sew up in a cloth that has first been wrung out in hot water and floured on the inside. Drop into a pot of boiling water and boil hard for an hour and a half. Take from the bag and serve with hard sauce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Milliners first plied their trade at Milan.

Plants are affected by various substances, just as animals are; electricity will stimulate them, narcotics will stupify and kill them.

The raft spider is a pirate. It receives its name from the fact that it constructs a raft of dry leaves and rubbish, united by threads of silk, and thus pursues its prey on water.

The reason given why birds do not fall off their perch is because they cannot open the foot when the leg is bent. Look at a hen walking, and you will see it close its toes as it raises its foot, and open them as it touches the ground.

Tinkers, or tinklers, as the Scotch call them, derived their name from the practice of itinerant members of that profession giving notice of their approach to villages and farmhouses by making a tinkling noise on brass kettles.

In the Sandwich Islands the apple has become wild, and forests of trees of many acres are found in various parts of the country. They extend from the level of the sea far up into the mountain sides. It is said that miles of these apple forests can occasionally be seen

The French have discovered that there is a good deal of money in flowers. In Paris the lily-of-the-valley has an enormous development, and constitutes a fruitful industry. The revenue from the sale of this dainty blossom in a recent year was estimated at £32,000, and thrifty men and women depend upon it for a living and a fortune.

The longest plants in the world are seaweeds. One tropical and sub-tropical variety is known which measures in length, when it has reached its full development, at least 600 feet. Seaweeds do not receive any nourishment from the sediment at the bottom or borders of the sea, but only from air and mineral matters held in solution in the sea-water.

It has now been practically settled that the chief sensation of the Paris Exhibition of 1900 will consist of a new bridge over the Seine, one hundred metres broad, and with houses, theatres, and monuments on either side of it, like the Point Neuf in olden days, not to mention Old London Bridge. It will span the Seine from the Champs Elysées to the Invalides.

A French physician has devised a vibrating helmet for the cure of nervous headache. It is constructed of strips of steel, put in vibration by a small electro-motor which makes six hundred turns a minute. The sensation, which is not unpleasant, produces drowsiness; the patient falls asleep under its influence, and awakes free from pain.

In Russia a horse that is addicted to the habit of running away has a thin cord with a running noose around his neck at the neck strap, and the end is tied to the dashboard. When a horse bolts he always takes the bit in his teeth, and the skill of the driver is useless; but the moment the pressure of the cord comes on the windpipe the horse knows he has met his master.

Cairo, Egypt, is becoming Anglicised so fast that, not content with electric lights, the government has given a concession for a tramcar system. The electric car idea promises to be adopted, and the whirr and fizz of the trolley will drive the donkey and the donkey boy out of business. In the near future the tourist will be able to take tram car to the Pyramids and wait for the returning one in the shadow of the Sphinx.

The Vatican, the magnificent palace of the Popes, is the most splendid residence in the world. It is built upon one of the hills of Rome, on the west bank of the Tiber, and its extent is enormous. It has 8 grand staircases, 200 smaller staircases, 20 courts, 12 great halls, and 1,100 apartments of various sizes. It is, indeed, hardly a palace, but a collection of palaces. The Vatican is rich in marbles, bronzes, and frescoes, in ancient statues and gems, and in paintings which are unequalled in the world, and also possesses a library, with a large and choice collection of manuscripts.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. K.—One shilling.

Fred.—You are not liable.

Merry May.—We do not know the reference.

Scot.—You cannot marry again without a divorce.

Worried.—Undisputed possession for twelve years.

Monte Carlo.—Gambling debts cannot be recovered.

M. E.—We fear there is no way of your removing the stain without injury to the dress.

N. C.—We have not the information by us, but you can obtain same at the chief post-office in your district.

Apprentice.—It depends upon the custom of the trade.

An Old Subscriber.—It is pronounced "Ked-rick," or "Sed-rick."

A Cockney.—High tide occurs twice in the twenty-four hours.

Jack.—Apply to the Secretary of the Treasury, Whitehall, London.

Felicia.—The full name of Lord Rosebery is Archibald Philip Primrose.

Darsie.—There is no charge of any kind for our answers to correspondents.

Aurora Leigh.—When it is genuine, it is the most beautiful and noble thing in the world.

Amateur.—Palms are grown from seed, never from cuttings of the leaves.

A Distracted Lover.—Tell her the truth, and let her decide whether she will wait for you or no.

An Ignoramus.—You will find the information in "Whittaker's Almanac," at the Public Library.

Ambitious.—It is contrary to our rule to give the names and addresses of publishers.

Etiquette.—It is proper to raise the hat with the left hand, when walking with a stick in the right one.

Phil.—Look in the London Directory. Addresses are not given.

M. S.—If it be the asthma there is no cure. Take it to a bird doctor.

Curiosity.—The value varies in accordance with the demand. Take it to a dealer.

Spider.—The dog license was at one time 12s., afterwards 5s., and is now 7s. 6d.

M. E.—The secretary is personally liable for money entrusted to his keeping.

M. D. W.—"Molyneux" is according to Webster's Dictionary, pronounced "Molynooks."

Laundry Maid.—Black cotton hose should be dried and ironed on the wrong side to prevent fading.

Jack.—Coin books containing the addresses of dealers, &c., can be procured at most booksellers.

Goo.—Dissolve gum arabic in hot water, and let it cool; the less the water the greater the adhesiveness.

Anxious One.—As we have so often advised, there is only one remedy, and that is to pull them out by the roots with a pair of tweezers.

Smith.—Cousin to the Queen and brother to the Duchess of Teck. The father of the Duke of Cambridge was a brother-in-law of the Duchess of Kent.

Paul Jones.—We are unable to say if the coin you mention is of any value, but if you take it to a dealer he could at once tell you.

Matrimonial.—The parties must be married in the parish in which they reside, and twenty-one days' notice is required.

Dullard.—You must consult the best histories, also such works as Haydn's or Townshend's Dictionaries of Dates.

Millicent.—Apply to the Patent Office, 25, Southampton-buildings, W.C., for all information as to trade-marks.

A Young Widow.—If you were left any money by your husband you are to that extent liable for his debts.

Round Rob.—For a young man the best cure for roundness of shoulders is military drill. Join a Volunteer corps.

Weary of Waiting.—Many people are engaged for years before they are able to settle the date of their marriage.

A Constant Reader.—The Bank of England is a private joint-stock bank: the Government is not in any way responsible for it.

Anxious Mistress.—If the servant does not serve out the term of notice you are not bound to pay her full wages for the notice month.

Emigro.—We cannot advise you as to emigration. Apply to the Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, S.W.

Gymnast.—So long as the exertion it exacts is not abused it may prove of benefit to the body as well as a means of mental relaxation.

A Sufferer.—A cure for headache depends entirely on the cause. What would benefit in one case might do harm in another.

Brutus.—Members of Parliament are addressed in the House of Commons as "the honourable member" merely by courtesy.

Micawber.—Debtors in prison are required to clean out their cells, we believe; but they are not subject to ordinary labour regulations.

M. P.—He must make a will in favour of his wife; otherwise she would share only with the next of kin, if there are no children.

A Would be Gardener.—Poppies come up year after year if they are of the hardy sort. Most of the finer ones must be planted every year.

Lady Clare.—It is one of the most difficult of colours to clean, and you will probably be unable to have it done save by a professional cleaner.

Curio.—If you can find some person who has a taste for antique objects, you can get a better price for them than of a dealer in such articles.

A Coquette.—Rose-water and glycerine, equal parts, in four times its bulk of water. Wash the face and apply while wet, rubbing it with the tips of the fingers.

A Royal Marine.—According to the information in our possession, the number of officers and men in the English navy is 68,800, that of France and Russia combined is 65,358.

Anxious One.—Plenty of exercise and bathing in cold water are the only sure remedies. There is not the slightest harm in eating and drinking the foods you mention in moderation.

HER ROSE.

A red rose grew in a garden fair,
Down by a western bay;
A red rose breathed in my lady's hair
On the night when I went away;
I sailed and sailed o'er the severing wave,
And a rose to my heart lay nigh,
The first sweet gift that my lady gave,
And the last ere I said "Good-by."
Oh! spring may pass, and the summer fade,
And many a bloom be shed;
But love will live till the debt is paid,
And I bring her rose home red.

Oh, Fate is strong, and the world is wide;
Broken with toil and pain,
I came at last on the turning tide
To the home of my youth again;
No roses grew on the south sea-wall;
And the maiden my heart loved best,
My first, my last, and my all in all,
Was away in the Land of Rest.
Oh, spring is past, and a hope betrayed,
And the fairest bloom is shed;
But love will live till the debt is paid,
And I bring her rose home red.

And there is Home, where my darling waits,
Where there is no more sea:
Fair faces throng at the open gates,
And a welcome is waiting me
Oh, Love! I come, be it late or soon,
And my promise was not in vain:
The rose you gave in that golden June
Shall be yours when we meet again.
Sad years have passed to the silent shade,
And my dearest hope is dead,
But love will live till the debt is paid,
And I bring her rose home red.

W. W.

L. Nelson.—The serial story "Cinderella" commenced in No. 1628, and is not yet completed. We can send you the ten numbers already published post-free for 1s. 3d.

F. R. S.—We cannot answer definitely being ignorant of your indentures, but should say nothing beyond paying your out of pocket expenses, which we do not think would include food in your case.

Anxious Inquirer.—The surgical operation for the purpose is extremely simple, and, in the hands of a properly qualified practitioner is not attended with the least danger.

Rosa Dartle.—A debtor cannot be sent to prison for disobedience of the order of the Court unless a judgment summons is issued, and the judge is satisfied that the debtor can pay, but will not do so.

Lena.—The fatal ice accident in Regent's Park took place on the 15th January, 1867. The rotten ice gave way, and two hundred persons were immersed, of whom nearly fifty perished.

A Colonial.—Great Britain received the name of Albion, by which it is often called, from Julius Cæsar, on account of the chalky cliffs upon the coast on his invasion, half a century before Christ.

Inexperienced.—Use a mixture of alcohol and highly rectified benzine. Apply with a perfectly clean sponge. Do the work in an apartment where there is neither a fire nor a lamp burning, to avoid the danger of an explosion.

M. B.—There are many preparations that are said to be efficacious, but one of the best is a saturated solution of citric acid. A saturated solution is as much of any crystal or powder as the water will take up. Get an ounce of the acid and put it in a two ounce bottle. Fill with water, and touch the freckles several times daily with it.

Cook.—Cut stale sponge cake into thin slices, spread them with currant jelly, or other preserves; put two pieces together like sandwiches, and lay them in a dish. Make a soft custard, and pour it over the cake while hot. Let it cool before serving it.

Helena.—Catacombs are subterranean cavities for the burial of the dead. The word is Greek, and means "cause to sleep." The most celebrated catacombs are those under the cities of Rome and Paris, the former extending for miles underground.

Bridal.—As a rule the bride goes to church in a carriage with her father. She does not leave his protection until she places her hand in that of her future husband at the altar. The bridegroom, bridesmaids, and best man are to go to the church in advance and be ready to receive the bride when she enters.

Mrs. H.—Borax in fine powder scattered about is as good as anything. Do not waste time or poisoned food of any sort that they will eat. The more you feed them the more they will come around. They increase so rapidly that there is really no use in trying to get rid of them by killing off. Leave no crumbs around. Keep all food covered and everything scrupulously clean, and there will be very little to complain of in the way of annoyance from roaches.

Berengaria.—Next to walking the best exercise for the female is generally thought to be moderate dancing; but the benefit derived from it is counteracted in crowded assemblies by impure air, mental excitement, excessive indulgence in eating and drinking and almost unavoidable exposure from being overheated. At home, we know of no pastime that is more beneficial, or more innocent, and if it were practised exclusively in the domestic circle few would condemn it.

Mollie.—Whether it be vegetable or animal, yellow is more permanent than any other colour. The yellow of a flower's petals is the only hue known to botanists that is not faded or entirely discharged upon being exposed to the fumes of sulphurous acid. Take the viola tricolour—heart's ease as an illustration. If exposed but a moment to these fumes the purple tint immediately takes its flight, and in the wallflower the yellow shines as brightly as ever after all other colours have fled.

Fanny B.—Chop the corn beef (cold of course) very fine, and put it in a greased pudding dish; moisten with some nice left-over gravy or drawn butter into which has been stirred a tablespoonful of tomato catsup. Have the mince quite soft. Spread over the top a thick layer of mashed potato which has been beaten smooth, with the addition of one egg, half a tea-cupful of milk, and a tablespoonful of butter. Salt and pepper to taste. Bake covered in a brisk oven for fifteen minutes, then uncover and brown nicely.

Young Wife.—Take four breakfast cups of milk, two table spoons cornflour, half pound sugar, one teaspoonful essence of vanilla; heat the milk and add to it the cornflour wet with a little cold milk; let it boil, then stir in the sugar and the vanilla, and set it aside to get quite cold, then freeze it. Any other flavour may be added instead of vanilla; lemon or strawberry, or a tablespoonful of chocolate may be boiled with the corn flour, and is good for a change. The cream may be made with skim milk; and an egg put in well beaten up, after it has boiled, that makes it a little yellow.

Doubtful Daisy.—Unless you think there is some reason for apprehending that there is more than friendship in your cousin's letters, there seems to be no reason for uneasiness. Because people find pleasure in each other's society it does not follow that love must come into the friendship. Of course, it would be a matter for regret if your pleasant letters were construed by your cousin into something more comprehensive. Do not allow your friends to worry you, but note carefully any symptoms of change in your cousin's sentiments. When you discover them it will be time enough to act.

L. Y. Z.—It is not unusual that they should only appear in the warm weather. A good trap is a glazed earthenware pan, in which put a little sugared beer as a lure, and place sticks round it to act as ladders for the "varmints" to creep up; they tumble in and revel for a time, and cannot get up the glazed sides of the pan. Next morning when you come to clear them out they may appear to be dead, but don't you believe it; just burn them in the fire to make sure. If you turn them into the dustbin they will all recover and march into your premises like giants refreshed. Strewing plenty of powdered borax perseveringly about their haunts will also rid you of them after a time.

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